



# Islamic Counseling Services for Students with Learning Difficulties

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## Abstract

Learning difficulties refer to challenges or obstacles that hinder students' academic performance. These difficulties can arise due to both internal and external factors. Islamic counseling services play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by offering support that promotes students' well-being and academic progress. In educational institutions such as schools and *madrasah*, counseling serves various functions, particularly its healing function, which is curative. The primary aim of counseling is to assist students (counselees) in overcoming personal, social, academic, and career-related issues. This study employs a descriptive method within the framework of library research to explore how learning difficulties can be mitigated through counseling. The findings indicate that learning difficulties can be effectively addressed through three forms of counseling services: individual, group, and classical services. Individual services involve one-on-one support between the counselor and the student, group services target small groups of students, while classical services address larger groups in a classroom setting. Islamic counseling emphasizes a gentle, compassionate approach in communication, allowing the counselor to touch the deeper conscience of the client. The guiding principle of Islamic counseling is to encourage mutual support in doing well and promoting righteousness.

## INTRODUCTION

Counseling is the process of assisting with counseling interviews conducted by a qualified expert (called a counselor) for individuals experiencing difficulties (referred to as clients), ultimately guiding them toward resolving their problems (Fradinata et al., 2023; Husni, 2017; Sitorus, 2023). Counseling involves support from skilled professionals to individuals in need

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of help. As such, counseling is crucial in human life. Syamsu Yusuf and Juntika Nurihsan describe counseling as a helpful relationship, where assistance refers to the effort to help others grow in their desired direction, solve the problems they face, and navigate life crises (Malfi et al., 2023; Mufidah et al., 2020).

The counselor's role is to create conditions that foster the growth and development of the client (Baen et al., 2024; Nurmallasari & Erdiantoro, 2020). In Arabic, the term for counseling is *al-Irsad*, which etymologically means *al-Huda* (guidance) and *ad-Dalalah* (direction). The term *al-Irsad* appears in the Qur'an, for example in Surah al-Kahf (18:17) and Surah al-Jin (72:2), emphasizing that Allah guides humanity to the path of truth. This shows that Islam inherently encompasses values of counseling, as Allah is the ultimate guide for His creation.

Counseling has various roles in schools, *madrasah*, and other institutions. One of its primary functions is curative, offering a healing role. Counseling in schools aims to help students with personal, social, academic, and career-related problems (Casmini & Hasanah, 2024; Habsy et al., 2023). In this context, counseling serves to resolve issues that hinder personal development and self-actualization. Among these issues, learning difficulties faced by students are particularly significant and can be addressed using counseling approaches in schools and *madrasah*.

Learning is a key aspect of counseling in schools because it is the core activity of education. Learning is a mental and psychological activity that occurs through active interactions and results in change. When students do not experience effective learning, the desired outcomes are not achieved optimally. Learning is a continuous process, emphasized for students engaged in educational activities at school or *madrasah*. Psychologically, learning is an internal process, and while the resulting change is not visible immediately, it manifests in areas such as attitudes, motor and sensory intelligence, and psychological states (Maulina et al., 2024).

However, not all students achieve optimal learning outcomes. Many experience difficulties that lead to learning failure. Prayitno notes that these failures are not always due to low intelligence or capability, but can result from external factors, especially in the school environment. For instance, students may fail because they do not receive adequate guidance to solve their learning problems (Prayitno & Setyowati, 2020). Schools must address learning difficulties by providing effective counseling services. These learning difficulties, which hinder academic success, need to be identified and resolved through appropriate interventions.

Based on the above, several research questions arise: What are learning difficulties? What factors contribute to them? How are learning difficulties identified? What types of Islamic counseling services can be provided to address these challenges? This study on "Islamic Counseling Services for Students with Learning Difficulties" aims to explore these questions. By answering these questions, the research seeks to offer insights into both the nature of learning difficulties and the counseling services that can be applied in educational settings.

## METHODS

This study employs a library research methodology, also known as literary research, combined with descriptive analysis. After collecting the relevant data, the next step involves data analysis to draw accurate and meaningful conclusions. To ensure precision in analyzing the data, content analysis techniques are applied (Arafah, 2016; Lockhart et al., 2022; Neuendorf, 2019; Renz et al., 2018)(Al-Azizi et al., 2024). Content analysis is a method used to deeply examine the substance of written or printed

information, particularly in mass media. This technique allows for the analysis of all forms of information related to the research variables, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Parry et al., 2014; Snelson, 2016).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Learning difficulties represent a complex issue that can affect students across all ability levels. In this context, the term "identification" refers to efforts to thoroughly recognize the problems or phenomena contributing to students' learning difficulties. Identification involves carefully recognizing symptoms that may indicate learning challenges (Hyman et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2016). This process parallels the diagnostic procedures employed by medical professionals, as guidance and counseling teachers must first diagnose students' learning difficulties before determining appropriate intervention strategies. The initial step in this process can involve the use of the Problem Uncovering Tool (AUM), enabling guidance and counseling teachers to identify student problems without requiring students to articulate these issues directly.

The diagnostic procedure proposed by Azevedo, (2015) is among the well-established methods for identifying learning difficulties. This procedure includes classroom observations to identify deviant behaviors, assessments of students' vision and hearing, interviews with parents or guardians, and the administration of diagnostic tests in specific skill areas. Intelligence (IQ) tests are also commonly used to diagnose learning difficulties, particularly for students suspected of having below-average abilities (Febriani et al., 2023; Salavera et al., 2017).

Grigorenko et al., (2020) emphasizes that learning difficulties are not exclusive to students with low abilities; they can also affect those with average to high capabilities. This indicates that learning difficulties are not solely an academic concern for students with low grades but can occur at various educational levels. Prayitno & Setyowati, (2020) refers to these challenges as "learning problems," which can manifest in various forms, including academic delays, suboptimal acceleration in learning, and lack of motivation. Furthermore, negative attitudes and habits detrimental to academic performance, such as procrastination or aversion to teachers, can significantly impact student success.

The factors contributing to learning difficulties can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors include physical and psycho-physical disorders, which may manifest as cognitive, affective, or psychomotor challenges (Handayani et al., 2018; Harsono & Hastuti, 2017; Khilmiyah & Wiyono, 2021). External factors encompass conditions within the family, community, and school environments that do not support students' learning efforts. For instance, discordant family relationships, impoverished living conditions, and inadequate educational resources can exacerbate students' learning difficulties (Fitri & Idris, 2019). Additionally, specific psychological syndromes, such as dyslexia (difficulty reading), dysgraphia (difficulty writing), and dyscalculia (difficulty with mathematics), can impede the learning process, even among students with normal or above-average IQ potential.

Guidance and counseling services play a crucial role in addressing learning difficulties. These services encompass individual, group, and classical counseling approaches. According to Sardjono et al., (2021), individual services provide students with direct, face-to-face interaction with a guidance and counseling teacher or counselor, allowing them to discuss their problems personally and receive tailored advice. Group services, conducted with small to large groups, enable students with similar challenges to share experiences and receive support from their peers, fostering a

collaborative approach to problem-solving. Emphasizes the significance of group dynamics in this context, as members can assist and encourage one another in overcoming learning obstacles (Nelson & Squires, 2017).

In addition to individual and group services, classical guidance approaches can efficiently provide information and orientation to students, particularly in settings with large student populations. Through classical services, guidance and counseling teachers can quickly identify students needing additional support. In classroom settings, teachers can present relevant materials on effective learning strategies, motivation, and social issues, encouraging students to voice their concerns and facilitating the identification of learning difficulties.

In the context of Islamic education, counseling services hold significant added value. As Casmini & Hasanah, (2024); Mardani, (2019) explains, Islamic counseling encompasses not only knowledge transfer but also value transmission. Counseling rooted in the Quran principles, emphasizing compassion and patience, underscores the importance of fostering gentle and wise communication between counselors and students. Verses from Surah Al-Maidah (5:2) and Al-Ashr (103:3) highlight the significance of mutual support and patience, foundational principles in Islamic counseling services. Consequently, students experiencing learning difficulties receive not only academic support but also guidance in internalizing moral and religious values that can enhance their motivation to learn.

Addressing learning difficulties involves a multi-step process that begins with data collection, followed by diagnosis, prognosis, and intervention. Data collection methods may include home visits, analysis of students' work, case studies, and diagnostic tests. Once data is gathered, counselors can assess the severity of the difficulties and identify contributing factors. In certain instances, collaboration with specialists, such as psychologists or medical professionals, may be necessary for a more comprehensive intervention (Dodson et al., 2022; Monaco et al., 2021). Prognosis entails planning specific support programs, which may include individual guidance, group interventions, or remedial assistance in particular subjects. The interventions employed can vary based on student needs, incorporating psychoeducational, neuropsychological, behavioral, or cognitive models (Engkizar et al., 2018; Maputra et al., 2020).

Evaluation constitutes a critical final step in assessing the effectiveness of the implemented interventions. This evaluation should encompass not only outcome measurements but also potential re-diagnosis and adjustments to the intervention plan if required. Following these systematic steps, counselors can effectively identify, analyze, and address students' learning difficulties, facilitating academic and personal development.

## CONCLUSION

Effective identification of learning difficulties is crucial for counselors and guidance teachers to address the various obstacles students face in their academic journey. These difficulties can arise from both internal factors, such as physical and psycho-physical conditions, and external factors, including family and community dynamics. To resolve these issues, a comprehensive approach involving individual, group, and classical counseling services is essential. Individual services cater to personal needs, group services foster peer support, and classical services efficiently reach larger student populations. Furthermore, Islamic counseling principles emphasize compassionate communication and mutual support, enabling counselors to connect with students on a deeper level and promoting a collaborative effort toward personal growth and academic success.

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