



Husn al-Zhann and Fear/Anxiety in Social Context among Muslim Emerging Adults

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Abstract: As individuals enter adulthood, they may experience social pressures that lead to anxiety. If an individual experiences anxiety, it is likely to result in various negative impacts on their social life. In this case, it is important for individuals to instill more positive thinking through *husn al-zhann* (positive assumption). This study aims to identify the correlation between *husn al-zhann* and social anxiety among 122 emerging adults ($n = 122$). The results show that *husn al-zhann* is negatively correlated with social fear/anxiety. Aspects of *husn al-zhann*, such as the absence of *hasad* (envy) and feeling God's compassion, are also negatively correlated with social fear/anxiety. Looking at the aspects of social interaction and performance situations, social interaction situations were found to have a negative correlation with feeling God's compassion, the absence of *hasad*, and the attitude of *husn al-zhann*. Meanwhile, performance-related situations showed a negative correlation with feeling God's compassion and the absence of *hasad*. This study has limitations in terms of sample size. Therefore, future research is expected to investigate the relationship between these variables with a larger and more varied sample size, as well as a more complex relationship model.

Keywords: social anxiety, *husn al-zhann*, Muslim, emerging adults.

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INTRODUCTION

Emerging adulthood refers to individuals in a developmental period between late adolescence and early adulthood, typically ranging from 18 to 25 years old. This stage is characterized by five key features that distinguish it from other age periods: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, a feeling of being “in-between,” and a sense of possibilities and optimism (Arnett, 2018). Emerging adults face various challenges in fulfilling

developmental tasks (Arnett, 2016; Arnett et al., 2014; Arnett & Mitra, 2020), which can potentially affect their psychological well-being (Condinata et al., 2021).

Individuals in emerging adulthood may experience feelings of shyness and avoidance induced by social anxiety. They face increasing societal pressures related to education and career expectations, which can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and anxiety (Damri, 2024; Putri et al., 2022). Barry et al. (2013) note that shyness and social anxiety during emerging adulthood

are associated with developmental tasks such as seeking commitment and validation in interpersonal relationships, finding a partner, career-related matters, and identity issues. These challenges can lead to avoidance behaviors, including social anxiety.

Social anxiety is a mental condition characterized by fear, anxiety, or avoidance of social interactions and situations where one may be scrutinized. People with social anxiety disorder have a heightened fear of being observed or judged by others. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) by American Psychiatric Association (2013), the core features of social anxiety disorder are persistent fear or anxiety and a consistent response to social or performance situations that may lead to embarrassment. Similarly, Liebowitz (1987) defines social anxiety as fear and avoidance in social interactions and performance-oriented situations.

The issue of social anxiety among young people has been explored in several studies. In Indonesia, 76.9% of 364 college students experience social anxiety (Suryaningrum, 2021). Globally, at least 1 in 3 young people (36%) report experiencing social anxiety (Jefferies & Ungar, 2020). This calls for further investigation.

Social anxiety can arise from various factors. Cognitive internal factors such as fear of negative evaluation, self-esteem, and self-perception predict social anxiety (Gök & Yalçinkaya-Alkar, 2023). Vieira Figueiredo et al. (2023) add that social anxiety can also be influenced by pervasive negative cognition, safety-seeking behaviors, and self-focused attention. Additionally, external factors from family and peer relationships can also predict the development of social anxiety in individuals (Bracik et al., 2012).

If left unaddressed, social anxiety can have negative impacts on individuals. Nath & Sahai (2024) state that social anxiety reduces levels of self-esteem and

life satisfaction. In the academic context, social anxiety can hinder academic achievement as students may develop behaviors such as a fear of participating in class (Zou, 2024). Therefore, efforts to mitigate social anxiety are necessary. One potential solution is fostering *husn al-zhann* (positive thinking) (Fairuzzahra et al., 2018).

Rusydi (2012) defines *husn al-zhann* as a heart-driven behavior and ethical virtue that encourages individuals to maintain positive assumptions about Allah and others. Rusydi (2012) further explains that *husn al-zhann* consists of two components: positive assumptions toward Allah, characterized by reliance (*tawakkal*), experiencing Allah's mercy, and forgiveness; and positive assumptions toward others, including the absence of spying (*tajassus*), hatred (*tabaaghadh*), and envy (*hasad*).

Rusydi (2012) emphasizes that *husn al-zhann* applies both to Allah SWT and humans, making it synonymous with the concept of positive thinking in Islam. Conversely, social anxiety is often triggered by repetitive negative thinking (Sluis et al., 2017a, 2017b). Individuals with social anxiety tend to negatively interpret or perceive situations that have not yet occurred. Such negative thoughts lead to fear and avoidance behaviors. To counteract these fear-inducing negative thoughts in social contexts, individuals are encouraged to develop positive thinking, such as *husn al-zhann* (Fairuzzahra et al., 2018).

Based on the aforementioned background, this study aims to identify the relationship between *husn al-zhann* and social fear/anxiety among emerging adults in Indonesia. The hypothesis posited is that there is a significant negative relationship between *husn al-zhann* and social fear/anxiety among emerging adults.

METHOD

Research Design

This study aims to examine the relationship between *husn al-zhann* and fear/anxiety in social contexts among emerging adults in Indonesia. Accordingly, it employs a quantitative correlational research design. Quantitative research involves generating numerical data and emphasizes efforts to objectively generalize findings to a population (Patten, 2017). Meanwhile, correlational research design investigates relationships between variables, which may be positive, negative, or non-existent.

Participants

The study involved 122 participants (N = 122), the majority of whom were female (78.7%), students (73.8%), and unmarried (95.9%). Participants were selected based on the incidental sampling method. Participants were recruited if they met the research criteria (age 18-25 years old and Muslim) and were willing to complete an electronic questionnaire (via Google Forms). The questionnaire included statements aligned with the measurement tools used in the study. Information about the study, including informed consent, was also provided in the questionnaire. The electronic questionnaire was disseminated using online platforms and social media channels.

Instruments

HZS-24

The HZS-24 scale, developed by Rusydi (2012), measures the level of *husn al-zhann*. This instrument consists of 24 items based on the aspects of having a positive assumption about Allah SWT and others (examples: "Wherever I go, I feel that Allah protects me"; "Toward some people I dislike, I want them to suffer"). Participants are asked to rate the statements using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1

= never to 5 = always. In this study, the reliability of the scale was tested and found to be good ($\alpha = .826$). Higher scores indicate higher levels of *husn al-zhann*.

Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS)

The LSAS, developed by Liebowitz (1987), measures social anxiety. It includes items based on two dimensions: social interaction situations (S) and performance situations (P) (examples: "Speaking to someone in authority (S)"; "Writing while being observed (P)"). Participants respond to statements using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = never to 3 = always. The scale was tested for reliability and found to have excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .904$). Higher scores indicate higher levels of social anxiety. In this study, we used 24 items from the scale that specifically measure fear/anxiety.

Analysis Techniques

Both assumption tests and hypothesis testing were conducted in this study. The assumption tests included normality and multicollinearity checks to determine whether parametric or non-parametric statistical tests should be used. Data were considered normal if z-skewness and z-kurtosis values fell within the range of -3.24 to 3.24 (Kim, 2013; Wulandari et al., 2022). Multicollinearity was absent if VIF = 1 (Shrestha, 2020). The data in this study were normally distributed (see Table 1) and showed no multicollinearity issues, as VIF = 1.000 and tolerance = 1.000 (Shrestha, 2020). The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's correlation analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study identified the frequency distribution of *husn al-zhann* and social anxiety levels among participants using percentiles for categorization into five

groups. The majority of participants exhibited very low levels of *husn al-zhann* (23.6%), followed by high (21.1%), moderate (19.5%), very high (18.7%), and low levels (16.3%). Meanwhile, the majority of participants reported low levels of social anxiety (23.6%), with very low,

high, and very high levels all sharing the same percentage (19.5%), and moderate levels at 17.1%.

In addition to identifying the levels of *husn al-zhann* and social anxiety, this study also conducted assumption testing.

Table 1. Data Description and Normality

	Mean	SD	Z-Skewness	Z-Kurtosis
<i>husn al-zhann</i>	80.34	11.816	-.748	-2.288349
<i>Tawakkul (Trusting in God)</i>	14.28	2.194	-.021	-.57775
Feeling God's Compassion	16.83	2.857	-3.992	-.671573
Feeling God's Forgiveness	13.25	2.761	.342	-.493699
Absence of <i>Tajassus</i> dan <i>Tahassus</i>	13.26	2.331	-.568	-.572126
Absence of <i>tabaaghadh</i>	13.37	2.629	-.491	-.494681
Absence of <i>hasad</i>	14.09	4.63	-2.365	-1.992878
Fear/Anxiety	38.97	12.07	.058	-.812027
social interaction situation	16.93	6.683	1.291	-1.299544
performance situation	22.03	6.459	-1.115	-1.150423

Based on Table 1, all variables in this study exhibit a normal distribution according to the Z-Skewness and Z-

Kurtosis index ratio, as the values fall within the range of -3.29 to 3.29 (Kim, 2013; Wulandari et al., 2022).

Tabel 2. Correlation among variables

	Social interaction situation	Performance situation	Total social fear/anxiety
<i>Tawakkul (Trusting in God)</i>	-.114	-.013	-.070
Feeling God's Compassion	-.332**	-.243**	-.314**
Feeling God's Forgiveness	-.007	-.154	-.079
Absence of <i>Tajassus</i> dan <i>Tahassus</i>	-.137	-.089	-.123
Absence of <i>tabaaghadh</i>	-.055	-.087	-.077
Absence of <i>hasad</i>	-.344**	-.207*	-.301**
Total <i>husn al-zhann</i>	-.249**	-.102	-.192*

Note: *. Correlation is significant (sig < .05)

Based on Table 2, social fear/anxiety has a negative relationship with each aspect of *husn al-zhann* (feeling God's compassion ($r = -.314$) and absence of *hasad* ($r = -.301$)). However, there are some aspects that do not show a significant relationship with social fear/anxiety, such as *tawakkul*, feeling God's forgiveness, absence of *tajassus* and *tahassus*, and absence of *tabaaghadh*. Nevertheless, overall, the significant relationship between social fear/anxiety and *husn al-zhann* indicates a negative direction ($r = -.192$; $r^2 = .037$).

Looking at Table 2, both social and performance situations also show a negative

relationship with aspects of *husn al-zhann*. It is reported that the social interaction situation negatively correlates with feeling God's compassion ($r = -.332$), absence of *hasad* ($-.344$), and *husn al-zhann* ($-.249$). Meanwhile, the performance situation negatively correlates with feeling God's compassion ($r = -.243$) and absence of *hasad* ($r = -.207$).

Discussion

This study demonstrates that positive thinking, such as *husn al-zhann*

(positive thinking), can reduce social anxiety. *Husn al-zhann* was found to explain 3.7% of social anxiety ($R^2 = 0.037$). This relationship can be explained by the fact that individuals with a positive mindset tend to view situations from a more optimistic perspective and have clearer cognition (Fairuzzahra et al., 2018). As a result, individuals who apply positive thinking through *husn al-zhann* tend to experience a reduction in social anxiety compared to those who adopt negative thinking patterns.

The study also identifies a significant negative relationship between social anxiety and several aspects of *husn al-zhann*, including the absence of *hasad* (envy). Feelings of envy can be triggered by concerns about closeness to others, both directly or through media, which exacerbates the fear of intimacy (Dominguez-Pereira et al., 2019). Individuals who feel worried and fearful in social contexts often have negative views, which may be influenced by feelings of hatred or dissatisfaction with something.

In addition to the absence of *hasad*, social anxiety was also found to have a negative correlation with the aspect of feeling God's compassion. This result aligns with the study by Ellison et al. (2014), which found that high levels of social anxiety tend to be associated with lower feelings of security in God. Rosmarin & Leidl (2020) also stated that a negative perception of God could predict greater anxiety.

The study also identified relationships between both social and performance interaction situations and *husn al-zhann* and its aspects. The social

interaction situation was reported to negatively correlate with feeling God's compassion, absence of *hasad*, and *husn al-zhann*. Meanwhile, the performance situation was negatively correlated with feeling God's compassion and absence of *hasad*.

Limitations of this study include the relatively small sample size and the use of outdated measurement tools. We recommend future research to explore the relationships between these variables in more complex models. It would also be beneficial to recruit larger and more diverse samples and use modern tools to increase the validity and generalizability of the results.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the research findings, *husn al-zhann* (positive thinking) is negatively correlated with fear in social contexts. Aspects of *husnuzan*, such as feeling God's compassion, the absence of *tajassus* and *tahassus* (intrusive suspicion and envy), and the absence of *hasad* (envy), are also correlated with social fear/anxiety. Looking at each aspect, social interaction situations were found to have a negative correlation with feeling God's compassion, the absence of *hasad*, and the attitude of *husn al-zhann*. Meanwhile, performance-related situations showed a negative correlation with feeling God's compassion and the absence of *hasad*. Future research is expected to explore the relationship model between *husn al-zhann* and social anxiety in more depth, with a more complex model and a more varied sample.

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