

Negotiating Embodied Piety: Gender-Responsive *Fiqh* Pedagogy and Religious Character Formation in Indonesian *Pesantren*

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62730/syaikhuna.v17i2.7898>

Article History: Received: [11-07-2026] Revised: [08-08-2026] Accepted: [16-09-2026] Published: [01-10-2026]

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Abstract

Character education has gained global prominence, yet the specific mechanisms through which gender-responsive religious instruction shapes moral dispositions in Islamic residential schools remain under-theorized. This qualitative instrumental case study examines the concept, implementation, and implications of women's jurisprudence (*fiqh al-nisa*) learning for religious character formation among female students at Pondok Pesantren Muhammadiyah Tahfidzul Qur'an Srumbung, Indonesia. The study collected data through three months of participatory observation, semi-structured interviews with eighteen participants, and institutional documentation, then analyzed them using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. Drawing on Glock and Stark's religiosity framework, Lickona's character formation model, and Mahmood's theory of embodied piety, the study finds that women's *fiqh* learning – centered on *Fiqhus Sunnah Lin Nisa* and implemented through integrated classroom instruction and dormitory-based guidance – contributes to strengthened belief, enhanced worship discipline, improved religious knowledge, deepened spiritual experience, and cultivated prosocial behavior. However, internalization is uneven: some students comply strategically, knowledge gains vary, and resistance reveals that moral formation is negotiated rather than mechanically transmitted. The study extends the Glock–Stark framework by integrating embodied piety theory to explain how *fiqh* knowledge becomes moral disposition, and it advances theorization of gender-responsive Islamic pedagogy by demonstrating that effectiveness depends on pedagogical orientations that invite questioning and support student agency. These findings offer empirical grounding for curriculum developers and policymakers seeking to strengthen character education through gender-responsive religious instruction.

Keywords: Women's *Fiqh*; Religious Character; Pesantren; Gender-Responsive Pedagogy; Embodied Piety

INTRODUCTION

The moral formation of young women in Islamic residential schools has become a pressing concern for scholars and policymakers seeking to understand how religious pedagogy shapes character in gendered contexts. While character education has gained global prominence as a core educational mission (UNESCO, 2022; Lickona, 1991), scholars have yet to theorize the specific mechanisms through which gender-responsive religious instruction cultivates moral dispositions. In Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, *pesantren* operate as immersive residential institutions where formal instruction, communal worship, and daily routines continuously reinforce religious values (Fahrurrozi, 2022; Haeruddin et al., 2019). This integrated structure creates conditions for observational learning and habituation that align with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Lickona's (1991)

tripartite framework of moral knowing, feeling, and action. Recent studies of *pesantren* character education confirm that these institutions cultivate religious commitment, social responsibility, and discipline through role modeling, habituation, and what Ma'arif and Arif (2026) describe as a “holistic and culturally embedded learning ecosystem”. Yet the same reviews note that gender-specific pedagogical interventions remain largely unexamined (Oktari & Kosasih, 2019; Mahmudiyah & Mulyadi, 2021).

Table 1

State of the Art: Previous Studies on Women's Fiqh, Gender, and Character Education in Pesantren

Author(s) (Year)	Focus	Method	Key Findings	Limitation/Gap
Basri (2013)	Women's <i>fiqh</i> content in <i>majelis taklim</i>	Qualitative	Fiqh women addresses ritual purity, worship, social ethics	Community-based, not institutional; no character outcomes
Lestari & Suhlimiati (2021)	Taharah haid learning in MI	Case study	Structured instruction improves practical competence	Focus on knowledge, not character formation
Munir & Niswati (2021)	Fiqh women in <i>madrasah</i>	Qualitative	Enhances religious literacy and <i>akhlak</i>	Madrasah context, not <i>pesantren</i> ; no embodied piety framework
Yaakob et al. (2025)	Female blood fiqh in Malaysian schools	Qualitative case study	Teachers lack content knowledge and contextual approaches	Secondary schools, not <i>pesantren</i> ; no character outcomes
Muafiah et al. (2024)	Female agency in <i>pesantren</i>	Anthropological	Nyai play essential role in promoting gender equality	Focus on leadership, not fiqh pedagogy
Faishol et al. (2026)	Nyai perspectives on preventing gender-based violence	Qualitative	Nyai articulate indigenous Islamic perspectives on institutional safety	Focus on institutional safety, not fiqh learning
Fahrurrozi (2022)	Character education in <i>pesantren</i>	Qualitative	<i>Pesantren</i> effective through immersive model	General programs, not gender-responsive fiqh
This study (2026)	Gender-responsive fiqh pedagogy and character formation	Instrumental case study	Dual-channel implementation; negotiated embodied piety across five religiosity dimensions	Single-case; cross-sectional

Note. The table synthesizes previous studies and positions the present study within the literature.

The scholarly conversation on women’s jurisprudence (*fiqh al-nisa*) in Indonesian *pesantren* has developed along two largely separate trajectories. One strand documents the content and delivery of women’s fiqh in community study circles and *majelis taklim*, emphasizing its role in enhancing religious literacy and practical competence (Mahmood, 2005; Ahmed, 2011; Munir & Niswati, 2021). Studies in this tradition have examined how women’s fiqh addresses matters directly shaping Muslim women’s daily religious lives—ritual purity, menstruation, postpartum bleeding, and modesty—and have demonstrated that

structured instruction in these topics enhances learners' confidence in fulfilling religious obligations (Basri, 2013; Lestari & Suhlimiati, 2021). For instance, recent work by Yaakob et al. (2025) on female blood *fiqh* in Malaysian secondary schools reveals that teachers often have limited content knowledge and rarely use contextual learning approaches, underscoring a persistent pedagogical gap even in formal Islamic education settings. A parallel strand examines gender dynamics in *pesantren* more broadly, often critiquing patriarchal structures while acknowledging institutional efforts toward gender justice (Hefner, 2020; van Bruinessen, 2021). Recent scholarship in this vein has documented *Nyai* perspectives on preventing gender-based violence (Faishol et al., 2026), the rise of female religious authority (Muafiah et al., 2024; Fauzan et al., 2025), the negotiation of gender norms within *pesantren* curricula (Nuroniayah, 2023), and the ways female students reconstruct their religious identities across institutional contexts (Mustofa et al., 2023). Muafiah et al. (2024), in their study of gendered *pesantren* in contemporary Indonesia, demonstrate how female agency operates within and against patriarchal structures, shaping everyday institutional life in ways that general character education scholarship has yet to theorize. Yet these literatures rarely intersect with the character education scholarship that theorizes how moral formation actually occurs. Moreover, recent scholarship on *pesantren* character education has conspicuously lacked studies examining how gender-responsive curricula contribute to religious character outcomes (Zuhdi, 2021; Berglund, 2015). The assumption that general religious instruction adequately addresses female students' character-formation needs remains empirically untested.

This gap is theoretically significant for three reasons. First, the frameworks most commonly used in character education—Glock and Stark's (1968) five-dimensional religiosity model and Lickona's (1991) moral development theory—have been validated primarily in Western, Christian contexts. Their applicability to Islamic educational settings, particularly those featuring gender-specific curricular elements, requires empirical verification rather than assumption (Huber & Huber, 2012). Second, recent scholarship on gender-responsive pedagogy in Islamic education has called for moving beyond curricular inclusion toward examining how pedagogical processes cultivate embodied dispositions (Shalaby, 2017; Kristjánsson, 2020). Saba Mahmood's (2005) influential work on embodied piety offers a conceptual vocabulary for understanding how repeated bodily practices and affective orientations shape religious subjectivity. Yet, studies of *pesantren* pedagogy have rarely operationalized this framework. Where it has been applied, the focus has tended toward *Nyai* perspectives on preventing gender-based violence and institutional safety (Faishol et al., 2026) rather than the everyday pedagogical processes through which *fiqh* knowledge becomes moral disposition. Third, the Muhammadiyah tradition's distinctive methodological approach to *fiqh*—grounded in *manhaj tarjih* and emphasizing contextual reasoning and social justice—offers a theoretically rich but understudied context for examining how modernist Islamic institutions negotiate gender-responsive religious instruction (Azra, 2022; Lukens-Bull, 2018). This negotiation is not merely curricular but pedagogical: it involves translating classical jurisprudential texts into learning experiences that speak to contemporary *santriwati*'s lived realities, a process that recent studies of *fiqh* pedagogy have begun to document in other contexts. Abdullah et al. (2026), for example, propose an integrative framework for transforming *fiqh* learning in *pesantren* that combines *turāth* (classical tradition), *maqāṣid al-*

sharī'ah, and digital pedagogy, arguing that a *maqāṣidic* orientation offers an alternative to the traditionalism-modernism dichotomy. Saefudin and Berdiati (2026) similarly show that problem-based and project-based learning can transform *fiqh* education from a normative, lecturer-centered model into a dialogic, contextual process. These studies suggest that the pedagogical dimension of *fiqh* instruction—how texts are taught, questioned, and applied—matters as much as the content itself.

This study addresses these lacunae by investigating the concept, implementation, and implications of women's *fiqh* learning at *Pondok Pesantren Muhammadiyah Tahfidzul Qur'an Srumbung Magelang*. This institution has systematically integrated *Fiqhus Sunnah Lin Nisa* into both classroom instruction and dormitory-based guidance. The study is guided by three research questions: What is the conceptual foundation of women's *fiqh* learning at this *pesantren*? How is women's *fiqh* learning implemented across classroom and residential settings? What implications does this learning have for female students' religious character formation across multiple dimensions of religiosity?

This study's novelty lies in its dual theoretical and empirical contribution. Theoretically, it moves beyond simply applying Western frameworks by examining how Glock and Stark's (1968) dimensions manifest in gender-responsive Islamic pedagogy, while integrating insights from Mahmood's (2005) work on embodied piety to explain the mechanisms through which *fiqh* instruction shapes character. This integration responds to recent calls for theorizing gender-responsive *fiqh* as a distinct pedagogical tradition rather than a derivative of general Islamic education. Anshor and Muttaqin (2022), for instance, examine how community-based settings implement gender-responsive *fiqh*, arguing that *fiqh* products must be reoriented to address contemporary issues affecting women and children. Nurjanah and Nur (2022) similarly document how gender-responsive *fiqh* movements mobilize *ijtihad* through social media, creating new spaces for interpretive authority beyond traditional institutions. Empirically, this study systematically examines women's *fiqh* pedagogy within a Muhammadiyah *tahfidz pesantren*, responding to calls for research that situates gender-responsive Islamic education within specific institutional and ideological contexts rather than treating it as a generic intervention (Hefner, 2020; van Bruinessen, 2021). Practically, the findings offer grounded strategies for curriculum developers and educators seeking to strengthen character formation through gender-responsive religious instruction, with implications for policy discussions on gender equity in Islamic education (Kementerian Agama RI, 2023).

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted an instrumental case study design within an interpretivist paradigm, following the procedural logic outlined by Yin (2018) for bounded-system inquiry. The instrumental orientation was chosen because the primary interest lay not in the case itself but in understanding a broader phenomenon—the role of gender-responsive jurisprudence pedagogy in religious character formation—while the case (the women's *fiqh* program at *Pondok Pesantren Muhammadiyah Tahfidzul Qur'an Srumbung*) served as the vehicle for that inquiry (Stake, 1995). The bounded system was the women's *fiqh* program, including its

curriculum, pedagogical practices, and residential guidance structures. This design enabled the researcher to examine how teachers, administrators, and students perceive and experience jurisprudence instruction in relation to religious character formation, while remaining attentive to the institutional and ideological context in which these experiences are embedded. Reporting follows the COREQ guidelines to ensure transparency and comprehensiveness (Tong et al., 2007). The study was conducted over three months (January–March 2024), allowing prolonged engagement with the setting and repeated observation of routine practices.

Participants and Sampling

The study was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Muhammadiyah Tahfidzul Qur'an Srumbung, Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia. This site was purposively selected based on three criteria: (a) a structured women's *fiqh* program using *Fiqhus Sunnah Lin Nisa* as the core text, (b) a twenty-four-hour residential system for female students, and (c) a distinctive institutional hybrid of Muhammadiyah modernism and Qur'anic memorization (*tahfidz*). Eighteen participants were recruited through purposive sampling (Patton, 2015), selecting information-rich individuals directly involved in the *fiqh* program: two *pesantren* leaders (*pengasuh*) responsible for institutional oversight, four female teachers (*ustazah*) serving as *fiqh* instructors, three dormitory administrators tasked with student supervision, and nine female students (*santriwati*) aged 15–19. This composition ensured that multiple positionalities within the institution were represented, allowing the study to capture the perspectives of both those who design and deliver the program and those who experience it as learners. While we interviewed all 18 participants and analyzed their transcripts, we present only the most illustrative quotes in the findings to avoid redundancy. Data collection spanned three months, enabling prolonged engagement with the setting and sufficient depth to address the research questions.

Instruments and Validation

The primary data-collection instruments were semi-structured interview protocols, observation guides, and documentation checklists. The research questions and theoretical framework informed the interview protocols, with tailored guides for each participant category addressing curriculum design, pedagogical methods, observed behavioral changes, and spiritual experiences. Observation guides focused on classroom interactions, dormitory routines, and religious practices. Documentation checklists guided the collection of curriculum frameworks, the *Fiqhus Sunnah Lin Nisa* text, class schedules, dormitory regulations, and institutional profiles. To ensure trustworthiness, we employed multiple validation strategies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We triangulated sources (teachers, students, administrators) and techniques (observation, interviews, documentation) to strengthen credibility. Member checking involved sharing preliminary interpretations with key participants (*ustazah and pengasuh*) to confirm accuracy and permit corrections. Prolonged engagement over three months facilitated relationship building, contextual understanding, and reduced observer reactivity. The researcher maintained reflexivity through a reflexive journal documenting assumptions and biases. As an external academic with no prior

affiliation, the researcher consciously bracketed their positionality and relied on regular peer debriefing with supervisors.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher gathered data through three complementary techniques (Flick, 2018). First, the researcher conducted participatory observation during classroom sessions, dormitory activities (congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation), and daily routines, recording systematic field notes twice weekly over the three months. Second, researchers conducted individual semi-structured interviews with all eighteen participants, each lasting 45–90 minutes. Researchers audio-recorded interviews with consent and conducted them in private settings within the *pesantren*. Third, the study collected institutional documentation—including the curriculum framework, the *Fiqhus Sunnah Lin Nisa* text, schedules, dormitory regulations, and institutional profiles—for contextual verification. To address potential social desirability bias in self-reported accounts, we systematically cross-referenced observational field notes with interview statements about student behavioral changes. *Pesantren* leadership granted administrative permission before we entered the field. We conducted all interviews in Indonesian, transcribed and translated them into English for reporting, and had a bilingual colleague verify transcript accuracy through back-translation.

Data Analysis

Analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. We read interview transcripts and field notes repeatedly to become familiar with them. Thematic analysis proceeded through three coding stages (Braun & Clarke, 2006): (a) open coding to identify initial concepts, (b) axial coding to group categories into broader themes, and (c) selective coding to refine core themes aligned with research questions. Manual coding supported by Excel enabled systematic organization. We continuously compared emergent patterns with raw data and iteratively verified conclusions by cross-referencing sources. When discrepancies emerged between self-reports and observational data, the team noted and analyzed them rather than dismissing them, allowing the analysis to capture the gap between subjective experience and observable behavior.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers obtained formal written permission from the *pesantren* leadership. All participants received comprehensive information about the study's voluntary nature and provided written informed consent. For participants under 18, we also secured parental or guardian consent alongside participant assent. The study ensured anonymity through pseudonyms, and the research team stored audio recordings securely, limiting access to the team. We offered no financial incentives, and participants were assured that their responses would not affect their standing within the *pesantren*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

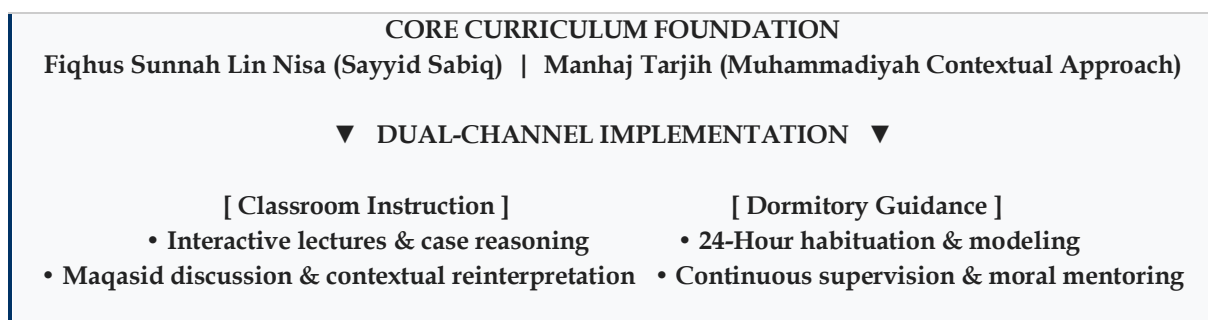
RESULTS

Concept of Women's *Fiqh* Learning

The conceptual foundation of women's *fiqh* learning at Pondok Pesantren Muhammadiyah Tahfidzul Qur'an Srumbung reflects a deliberate pedagogical commitment to addressing female students' distinct religious needs. Institutional documentation shows the program was established in response to concerns that general *fiqh* instruction did not adequately equip *santriwati* to understand rulings specific to women's bodily experiences and social roles. This recognition aligns with Basri's (2013) observation that women's *fiqh* addresses matters directly shaping Muslim women's daily religious lives, including ritual purity, worship, and social ethics. As one *pesantren* leader articulated: "We realized that teaching *fiqh* without distinguishing between male and female contexts left our *santriwati* confused. They needed knowledge that directly speaks to their lived realities as young Muslim women." (Pengasuh A, interview, February 2024).

The curriculum centers on *Fiqhus Sunnah Lin Nisa* by Sayyid Sabiq, chosen for its comprehensive treatment of women's jurisprudence and its accessibility for learners at various educational levels. According to the *ustazah*, the text provides balanced coverage of ritual purity (*thaharah*), prayer, fasting, charity, and social ethics specifically addressed to women. Classroom observations confirmed that lessons systematically progress from foundational concepts of ritual purity to more complex matters of worship obligations and social conduct. However, the conceptual framework is not without its tensions. One *ustazah* acknowledged that the text's traditional formulations occasionally require contextual reinterpretation when applied to contemporary *santriwati*'s lived realities—a negotiation that reflects the broader Muhammadiyah tradition of *manhaj tarjih* with its emphasis on contextual reasoning.

Program objectives extend beyond cognitive mastery to encompass behavioral transformation, consistent with Lickona's (1991) framework, which emphasizes that character education requires movement from knowing to feeling to acting. Curriculum planning documentation indicates that while formal lesson plans are not structured as in conventional schools, thematic sequencing follows the text's organization, introducing topics according to developmental appropriateness and seasonal religious events. This flexible yet systematic approach reflects the distinctive pedagogical traditions of *pesantren* education identified by Fahrurrozi (2022) and Amrullah (2020). Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model underlying this program.



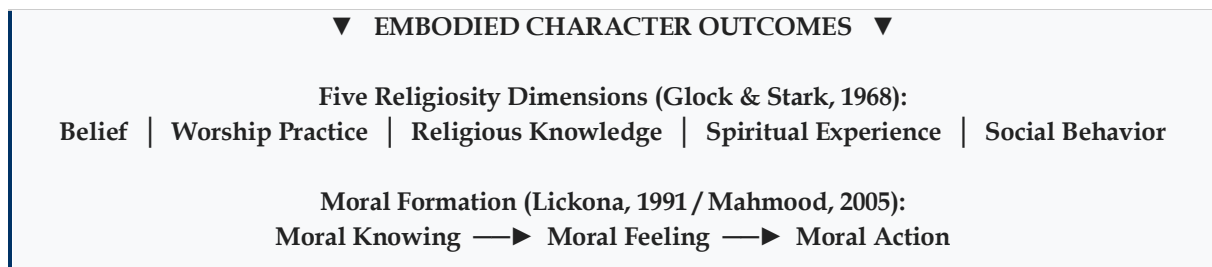


Figure 1
Conceptual Model of Women's Fiqh Learning and Religious Character Formation

Note. Adapted from Glock and Stark (1968), Lickona (1991), and Mahmood (2005). The model illustrates how dual-channel implementation operates across five religiosity dimensions.

Implementation of Women's Fiqh Learning

Implementation occurs through two complementary pathways: classroom instruction and dormitory-based guidance. This dual structure ensures that learning is not confined to formal sessions but permeates students' daily lives, consistent with the integrated educational model characteristic of *pesantren* institutions (Haeruddin et al., 2019; Oktari & Kosasih, 2019). Figure 2 illustrates the implementation flow across these two interconnected channels.

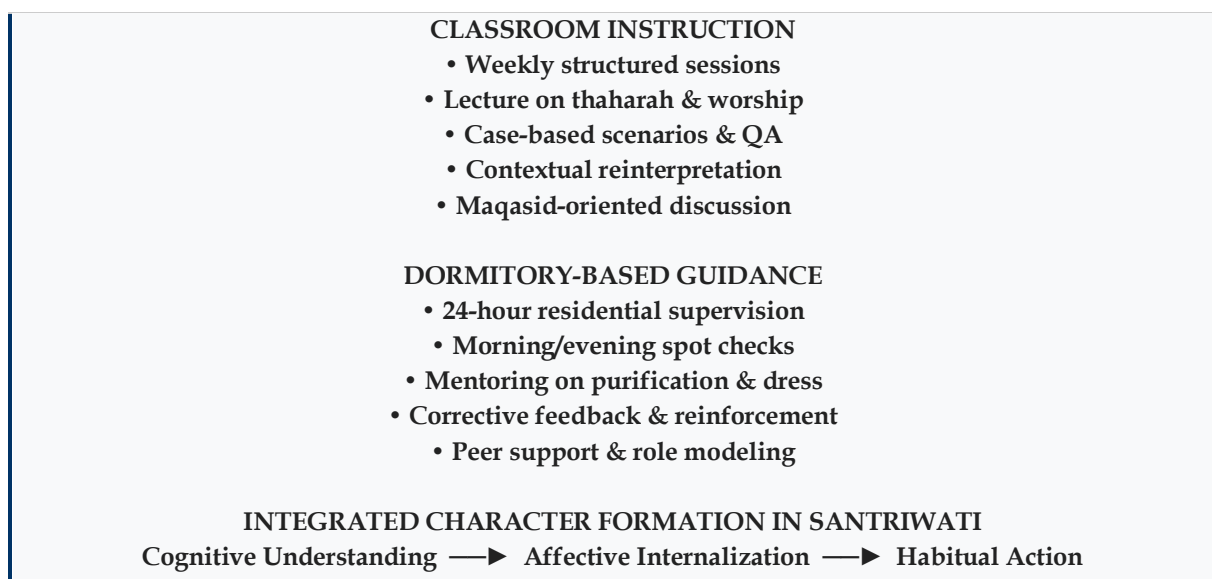


Figure 2
Implementation Flow of Women's Fiqh Learning

Note. The diagram synthesizes observational data from classroom sessions and dormitory routines across the three-month fieldwork period.

Classroom Instruction

Weekly classroom sessions employ varied pedagogical methods. Observations across multiple sessions revealed *ustazah* using lectures to deliver foundational concepts, discussions to explore practical applications, and case-based questioning to test comprehension. During observed sessions on ritual purity, students were presented with hypothetical scenarios involving worship obligations and asked to collaboratively derive appropriate rulings. This interactive approach reflects Mansir's (2021) recommendation that *fiqh* instruction employ

diverse methods to engage learners actively and Dewanti and Fajriwati's (2020) emphasis on demonstration-based learning.

Students demonstrated active engagement through questioning and peer discussion, with *ustazah* facilitating rather than dominating the learning process. One *ustazah* emphasized the pedagogical value of interactive methods, explaining that students learn more effectively when they actively engage with material and bring questions from their own experiences. A *santriwati* similarly described how the course transformed her understanding, noting that she now comprehends the complete rulings governing ritual purity rather than merely knowing when not to pray (Santriwati B, interview, February 2024). This testimony aligns with Munir and Niswati's (2021) finding that comprehensive women's *fiqh* instruction enhances students' religious literacy and practical competence.

However, classroom observations also revealed moments of disengagement and resistance. During one session on modesty and dress code, several students exchanged skeptical glances, and one openly questioned whether the rulings were "realistic for today's social media culture." The *ustazah* responded not with dismissal but by inviting discussion of the underlying principles (*maqasid*) of modesty, demonstrating the negotiated pedagogy that characterizes Muhammadiyah's contextual approach.

Dormitory-Based Guidance

Beyond classroom instruction, daily dormitory supervision reinforces learning. Dormitory administrators oversee students' application of *fiqh* rulings in practice, including ensuring proper ritual purification, adherence to dress codes, and timely prayer. Observation of morning routines revealed administrators conducting spot checks on prayer performance and providing immediate correction when procedures were incomplete. This residential mentoring system embodies the twenty-four-hour educational approach that distinguishes *pesantren* from conventional schools (Fahrurrozi, 2022).

Administrators described their role as primarily guiding rather than merely enforcing rules. When students are uncertain about procedures, administrators demonstrate correct practices; when questions arise about whether ritual purity requirements are met for prayer, they help students apply classroom learning to actual situations. This integration of classroom and dormitory instruction reflects Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which emphasizes that learning is most effective when reinforced through observation and practice in authentic settings.

Yet the supervisory dimension also generates friction. One dormitory administrator admitted that some students strategically comply with regulations—performing expected behaviors only when they know they are being observed—while reverting to previous habits in peer-only spaces. Another noted that the line between supportive guidance and supervision sometimes blurs, especially when students see monitoring as controlling rather than caring.

Strategies for Religious Character Formation

Analysis of observational data and participant accounts identified four interrelated strategies for religious character formation: habituation, exemplary modeling, moral development through guidance, and continuous supervision. Together, these strategies operationalize the pedagogical principles Lickona (1991) articulated and contemporary character education scholarship reinforced (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Narvaez, 2014). Table 2

summarizes these strategies, their observed manifestations, and the frictions noted during fieldwork.

Table 2
Strategies for Religious Character Formation: Manifestations and Frictions

Strategy	Observable Manifestation	Noted Friction
Habituation	Daily congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, recommended prayers (<i>rawatib</i>)	Initially effortful practices became habitual over time; some students reported 'going through the motions' during busy academic periods
Exemplary Modeling	Ustazah arriving early for prayers, maintaining modest dress, engaging in voluntary worship	Students occasionally questioned whether teachers' exemplary behavior was 'for show' during observation periods
Moral Development through Guidance	Connecting ritual purity to character purity; addressing honesty, compassion, and responsibility	Some students resisted connecting ritual rulings to social ethics, viewing fiqh as primarily about worship
Continuous Supervision	Spot checks on prayer and purification; immediate correction; positive reinforcement	Strategic compliance in peer-only spaces; perception of monitoring as restrictive rather than supportive

Note. Data synthesized from classroom observations, dormitory field notes, and interviews with ustazah, administrators, and santriwati (January–March 2024).

Habituation emerged as the most pervasive strategy. Religious activities became a daily routine: congregational prayers at five prescribed times, morning and evening Qur'an recitation, and observance of recommended prayers (*rawatib*). *Santriwati* consistently reported that repeated practice transformed initially effortful actions into natural habits. This finding aligns with Ahsanulhaq's (2019) emphasis on habituation as a primary method for developing religious character in *pesantren* settings and supports Narvaez's (2014) argument that repeated practice shapes moral character.

Exemplary modeling was evident, as *ustazah* and dormitory administrators served as behavioral models and demonstrated the religious practices they taught. Observations confirmed that teachers arrive early for prayers, maintain modest dress, and engage in voluntary worship, providing students with concrete examples of religious commitment (Bandura, 1977). Moral development through guidance extends beyond ritual instruction to address ethical dimensions of faith, including honesty, compassion, and social responsibility. During observed sessions, *ustazah* connected spiritual purity to character purity. This emphasis reflects Lickona's (1991) concept of moral knowing and moral feeling as prerequisites for moral action and resonates with Mahmood's (2005) analysis of embodied spiritual dispositions. Administrators maintained continuous supervision by actively monitoring students' behavior and providing both corrective guidance and positive reinforcement. This supervisory function aligns with Suriadi's (2020) observation that *pesantren* environments effectively shape character through ongoing monitoring and feedback.

Implications for Religious Character Formation

The implications of women’s fiqh learning were evident across five dimensions of religious character, consistent with Glock and Stark’s (1968) multidimensional religiosity framework: belief, worship practice, religious knowledge, spiritual experience, and social behavior. Table 3 synthesizes the observed and reported outcomes across these dimensions, including qualifying nuances that complicate any straightforward success narrative.

Table 3
Implications of Women’s Fiqh Learning Across Religiosity Dimensions

Dimension	Evidence from Learning	Observed Outcome	Qualifying Nuance
Belief	Understanding rulings as divine commandments; comprehension of jurisprudential rationale (‘illah)	Strengthened faith commitment; shift from passive compliance to active conviction	Some students continued to accept rulings primarily on authority rather than independent reasoning
Worship Practice	Daily performance of prayers, purification, and Qur’an recitation	Enhanced discipline and independence; self-regulated practice	Strategic compliance observed in peer-only spaces; habit formation varied across individuals
Religious Knowledge	Mastery of Fiqhus Sunnah Lin Nisa content	Improved comprehension of women’s fiqh; ability to apply rulings to personal circumstances	Knowledge gains were uneven; some students struggled with complex rulings on ritual purity
Religious Experience	Spiritual connection through worship; emotional tranquility	Heightened emotional connection and sense of purpose	Reports of tranquility were self-reported; observational data could not fully verify internal states
Social Behavior	Application of ethics in interpersonal relations	Increased respect, responsibility, and community care	Improvements were most pronounced in structured settings; transfer to unstructured peer interactions was inconsistent

Note. The table synthesizes findings from interviews with eighteen participants, classroom observations, and dormitory field notes.

Santriwati demonstrated a stronger conviction that Islamic teachings are divine commandments rather than merely cultural traditions. Students explained that understanding the jurisprudential rationale strengthened their spiritual commitment. As one student expressed, “understanding the reasoning deepens my faith” (*Santriwati Desi*, interview, February 2024). This finding aligns with Mahmudiyah and Mulyadi’s (2021) observation that understanding the rationale behind religious rulings enhances learners’ commitment and supports Huber and Huber’s (2012) finding that cognitive engagement strengthens belief dimensions of religiosity.

Observed improvements in discipline included timely prayer attendance, consistent Qur’an recitation, and proper performance of ritual purification. Administrators noted fewer missed congregational prayers than in prior periods, reflecting a shift from external

compliance to internalized commitment (Lickona, 1991). Post-learning assessments and classroom observations revealed enhanced comprehension of fiqh rulings specific to women (Saree & Sya'bani, 2020; Berglund, 2015). Students reported heightened spiritual awareness and emotional connection to worship (Mahmood, 2005; Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015). These self-reported findings were consistent across interviews, though observational data could not fully verify internal states. Finally, observations indicated improvements in interpersonal conduct, including increased mutual respect and community responsibility, reflecting the behavioral consequences of religiosity that Glock and Stark (1968) describe. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that women's *fiqh* learning at this *pesantren* is systematically conceived, implemented through dual instructional channels, and produces meaningful – though uneven – implications across multiple dimensions of *santriwati* religious character.

DISCUSSION

Engaging the Theoretical Frameworks: What the Findings Confirm and Complicate

The findings empirically validate Glock and Stark's (1968) multidimensional religiosity framework while also exposing its limitations in the specific context of women's jurisprudence pedagogy in Indonesian *pesantren*. The five dimensions – belief, worship practice, religious knowledge, religious experience, and social behavior – emerged clearly across participant accounts and observational data, confirming that religiosity is a multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be reduced to any single indicator (Huber & Huber, 2012). The belief dimension manifested through *santriwati*'s strengthened conviction that Islamic rulings are divine commandments rather than merely cultural traditions, a shift from passive compliance to active conviction that participants themselves attributed to understanding the jurisprudential rationale (*'illah*) behind rulings. As *Santriwati D* expressed, "understanding the reasoning deepens my faith." This finding resonates with Mahmood's (2005) analysis of how religious knowledge cultivates embodied spiritual dispositions, suggesting that cognitive engagement with religious content strengthens the affective dimension of belief. It also aligns with *Mahmudiyah* and Mulyadi's (2021) observation that understanding the rationale behind religious rulings enhances learners' commitment to Islamic values.

However, the findings also expose a limitation that Glock and Stark's framework does not fully address: the framework measures dimensions of religiosity. Still, it does not explain the mechanisms that cultivate these dimensions. To address this, the study turns to Mahmood's (2005) analysis of embodied piety, which offers a vocabulary for understanding how repeated bodily practices, affective orientations, and disciplinary regimes shape religious subjectivity. The dormitory-based guidance observed in this *pesantren* – with its emphasis on habituation, exemplary modeling, and continuous supervision – operates precisely as the kind of disciplinary regime that Mahmood describes. *Santriwati* do not simply learn about ritual purity; they perform it repeatedly, are corrected when procedures are incomplete, and observe their teachers modeling the practices they teach. This is not a linear process of knowledge transmission but an embodied pedagogy in which bodily practice, affective orientation, and cognitive understanding reinforce one another. The finding that some students comply strategically – performing expected behaviors only when observed – further supports Mahmood's insistence on attending to the complexities of agency within disciplinary

contexts. Compliance and resistance coexist, and moral formation is negotiated rather than mechanically transmitted.

The study also integrates Lickona’s (1991) character formation model with Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory. Lickona’s tripartite structure of moral knowing, feeling, and action maps onto the *pesantren*’s dual-channel implementation: classroom instruction addresses moral knowing, dormitory guidance cultivates moral feeling through habituation and modeling, and the integration of both channels produces moral action. Yet the findings complicate this model by revealing that the progression from knowing to feeling to acting is neither automatic nor uniform. Some *santriwati* demonstrated strengthened belief and improved knowledge but struggled to maintain consistent practice; others complied outwardly while harboring skepticism. These findings suggest that Lickona’s model is best understood not as a linear sequence but as a set of interrelated capacities that develop unevenly and require continuous reinforcement. This interpretation aligns with Narvaez’s (2014) argument that moral habituation shapes character at the neurobiological level through repeated practice, and with Mahmood’s (2005) caution that embodied dispositions are never fully settled and remain subject to negotiation.

Table 4
Theoretical Integration: Frameworks, Contributions, and Empirical Complications

Framework	Core Contribution to the Study	Empirical Complication
Glock & Stark (1968)	Provides multidimensional lens for analyzing religiosity across belief, practice, knowledge, experience, and social behavior	Measures dimensions but does not explain the mechanisms by which they are cultivated; dimensions are mutually reinforcing but develop unevenly
Lickona (1991)	Tripartite model of moral knowing, feeling, and action maps onto dual-channel implementation	Progression from knowing to feeling to acting is neither linear nor automatic; students may master knowledge without consistent practice
Bandura (1977)	Explains observational learning and modeling in dormitory guidance	Modeling can be perceived as 'for show'; strategic compliance suggests limits of observational learning without internalization
Mahmood (2005)	Explains how embodied practices and disciplinary regimes shape religious subjectivity	Highlights student agency and resistance; compliance and skepticism coexist, complicating any straightforward success narrative

Note. The table synthesizes the study’s engagement with four theoretical frameworks and the empirical complications that emerged from the findings.

Dialogue with Global Scholarship: Situating the Findings

This study’s findings both confirm and extend existing scholarship on Islamic education, character formation, and *pesantren* pedagogy. In confirming prior research, the study aligns with Fahrurrozi’s (2022) documentation of *pesantren*’s effectiveness in character formation through immersive residential education. The dual-channel implementation structure—classroom instruction and dormitory guidance—mirrors the integrated educational model

that Haeruddin, Rama, and Naro (2019) identify as distinctive to *pesantren* institutions. Similarly, the emphasis on habituation as a primary strategy aligns with Ahsanulkhaq's (2019) finding that repeated practice is central to religious character development in *pesantren* settings. The finding that exemplary modeling by *ustazah* facilitates character formation directly supports Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. It extends Oktari and Kosasih's (2019) observation that teacher modeling is critical to character education in Islamic schools.

The study also extends prior research in several important respects. First, while Mahmudiyah and Mulyadi (2021) examined general character formation in *pesantren*, this study specifically addresses gender-responsive pedagogy, showing that women's *fiqh* instruction offers a distinctive pathway to character development that general religious education may not provide. This finding responds to Berglund's (2015) call for more nuanced attention to gender dynamics in Islamic pedagogy. It extends Zuhdi's (2021) work on hidden curricula in *pesantren* by examining explicit gender-responsive curriculum content. The finding that *santriwati* developed increased confidence in their religious knowledge and practice also resonates with Muafiah et al.'s (2024) documentation of female agency in *pesantren*. However, this study suggests that agency operates not only through leadership roles but also through everyday pedagogical processes in *fiqh* learning.

Second, while Basri (2013) and Lestari and Suhlimiati (2021) examined women's *fiqh* content in community-based learning settings, the present study demonstrates how such content functions within structured institutional education. This institutional dimension is significant because it suggests that women's *fiqh* can be systematically integrated into formal curricula, with measurable implications for religious character formation. This finding extends Munir and Niswati's (2021) work on women's *fiqh* in madrasah settings by showing similar outcomes in the distinct residential *pesantren* context. It also speaks to Yaakob et al.'s (2025) finding that Malaysian Islamic education teachers often possess limited content knowledge and rarely apply contextual learning approaches when teaching female blood *fiqh*; the present study suggests that a structured, text-based program with integrated dormitory guidance can address some of these pedagogical gaps, though it also reveals that knowledge gains are uneven. Some students continue to struggle with complex rulings.

Third, the study contributes to the growing international literature on Islamic schooling beyond Indonesia. Hefner's (2020) analysis of Islamic education transformation in Southeast Asia emphasizes the need for empirical studies of how *pesantren* respond to contemporary challenges. This study responds to this call by showing how one *pesantren* addresses the specific challenge of female students' religious character formation through intentional curriculum design. Similarly, van Bruinessen's (2021) documentation of evolving *pesantren* traditions highlights the importance of gender-responsive innovations; this study provides empirical evidence of one such innovation and its outcomes. The finding that the *pesantren* navigates tensions between traditional jurisprudential formulations and contemporary realities through *manhaj tarjih* also resonates with recent scholarship on *fiqh* pedagogy that emphasizes *maqāṣid*-oriented and contextual approaches (Abdullah et al., 2026; Saefudin & Berdiati, 2026).

Interpretation Validation: Connecting Claims to Evidence

The interpretations advanced in this discussion are grounded in the empirical evidence presented in the findings section. The claim that women's *fiqh* learning strengthens belief is supported by *santriwati's* reported conviction that understanding rulings enhances faith commitment, exemplified by *Santriwati D's* statement. Observational evidence of improved worship practice supports this claim, as do administrator reports of self-regulated practice. However, the study must acknowledge the nuance that strategic compliance occurs in peer-only spaces. *Participants'* demonstrated ability to articulate and apply *fiqh* rulings supports the claim that religious knowledge increases, though knowledge gains were uneven. *Santriwati's* descriptions of emotional connection and tranquility in worship support the claim that religious experience deepens. However, these reports are self-reported, and observational data cannot fully verify internal states. Observations and administrator reports of improved interpersonal conduct support the claim that social behavior improves, though improvements were most pronounced in structured settings.

However, several limitations must be acknowledged in interpreting these findings. First, the single-case design limits generalizability; findings reflect the specific context of one Muhammadiyah *tahfidz pesantren* and may not transfer directly to other *pesantren* with different institutional characteristics. Second, the cross-sectional data collection means we cannot definitively attribute observed outcomes solely to the women's *fiqh* program, as other factors – maturation, peer influence, and other *pesantren* experiences – may have contributed. Third, the reliance on self-report data for some dimensions (particularly belief and religious experience) introduces potential social desirability bias, as *santriwati* may have presented themselves favorably. Fourth, the absence of longitudinal data prevents assessment of whether character changes persist over time. These limitations do not invalidate the findings; rather, they contextualize them as preliminary evidence from a single, revelatory case.

Contribution Mapping: Theoretical, Empirical, and Practical

This study makes three interconnected contributions. Theoretically, it extends Glock and Stark's (1968) multidimensional religiosity framework by integrating Mahmood's (2005) theory of embodied piety, offering a more robust account of how religious knowledge becomes moral disposition in gendered Islamic institutions. While the Glock-Stark framework has been widely applied in the sociology of religion, its use in Islamic education settings – particularly those with gender-responsive curricula – has been limited. This study shows that the five dimensions remain analytically robust when applied to Muslim women's religious learning and that they mutually reinforce one another: knowledge enhances belief, belief motivates practice, practice deepens experience, and experience reinforces social behavior. Mahmood's framework addresses a key limitation of Glock and Stark by explaining how these dimensions are cultivated – not through mere instruction but through embodied practices, affective orientations, and disciplinary regimes.

Empirically, the study systematically examines women's *fiqh* pedagogy within a Muhammadiyah *tahfidz pesantren*, responding to calls for research that situates gender-responsive Islamic education within specific institutional and ideological contexts (Hefner, 2020; van Bruinessen, 2021). The finding that the *pesantren* negotiates tensions between classical jurisprudential texts and contemporary realities through *manhaj tarjih* offers a

concrete example of how modernist Islamic institutions approach gender-responsive religious instruction. This finding contributes to broader debates about Islamic legal reasoning and pedagogical renewal, as recent scholarship has emphasized the importance of *maqāṣid*-oriented approaches in fiqh education (Abdullah et al., 2026; Saefudin & Berdiati, 2026).

Practically, the study offers grounded strategies for curriculum developers, *pesantren* educators, and policymakers. By integrating classroom instruction with dormitory-based habituation, modeling, and supervision, it offers a replicable pedagogical model other *pesantren* can adapt. The emphasis on interactive teaching methods – discussion, case studies, demonstration – challenges traditional lecture-dominated approaches while remaining grounded in *pesantren*'s distinctive educational culture. For curriculum developers, the study demonstrates the value of gender-responsive content that addresses female students' specific religious concerns. Accessible texts like *Fiqhus Sunnah Lin Nisa*, which systematically address women's jurisprudence, offer a model for curriculum materials that are both academically rigorous and practically relevant. For policymakers, the study provides evidence supporting the integration of gender perspectives into Islamic education curricula, suggesting that gender-responsive religious instruction not only serves equity goals but also enhances educational effectiveness.

Implications and Future Research

This study's findings suggest several directions for future research. First, comparative studies across different types of *pesantren* (Muhammadiyah, NU, Salaf, modern) could illuminate how institutional characteristics shape women's fiqh instruction and its character outcomes. Second, longitudinal research tracking *santriwati* over time could assess whether character changes persist post-graduation and whether learning translates into sustained religious commitment in adult life. Third, quantitative studies using validated religiosity scales (e.g., Huber & Huber, 2012) could complement the qualitative findings by measuring the magnitude of character change and statistically testing hypothesized relationships. Fourth, research comparing women's fiqh instruction with other gender-responsive pedagogy (e.g., women's studies in Islamic history) could identify which pedagogical approaches are most effective for character formation. Fifth, studies examining graduates' perspectives could offer retrospective insights into the long-term impact of women's fiqh learning on their religious lives.

For *pesantren*, several practical recommendations emerge: integrate women's fiqh instruction as a core curriculum component rather than an elective or supplementary offering; strengthen the connection between classroom instruction and dormitory guidance through regular coordination between *ustazah* and dormitory administrators; invest in teacher professional development for interactive pedagogical methods; develop assessment tools that capture not only knowledge gains but also behavioral outcomes and spiritual experiences; and create spaces for peer learning where *santriwati* can share experiences and support each other's religious development.

At the policy level, national curriculum frameworks for Islamic education should explicitly address gender-responsive pedagogy as a dimension of quality; teacher certification and professional development programs should include training in gender-responsive religious instruction; research funding should prioritize studies examining the effectiveness

of gender-responsive pedagogy in Islamic education; and policy dialogues about character education should recognize the distinctive contribution of religious education to character formation goals.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the concept, implementation, and implications of women's *fiqh* learning for religious character formation among female students at *Pondok Pesantren Muhammadiyah Tahfidzul Qur'an Srumbung* Magelang. This inquiry yields a central thesis: women's *fiqh* learning offers a distinctive pathway for religious character formation, but it is neither linear nor uniformly successful. The study advances three interconnected claims. First, the curriculum addresses a genuine pedagogical gap by giving female students knowledge directly relevant to their bodily experiences and worship obligations — knowledge general *fiqh* instruction fails to provide. Second, the dual-channel implementation structure, combining classroom instruction with dormitory-based guidance, creates an immersive learning environment where cognitive understanding is continuously reinforced through practical application, habituation, and exemplary modeling. Third, the implications extend across all five dimensions of religiosity identified by Glock and Stark (1968), though with qualifications that complicate any straightforward success narrative: internalization is uneven, resistance occurs, and the transfer from knowledge to action is mediated by negotiation rather than mechanical transmission.

Theoretically, the study extends Glock and Stark's (1968) framework by integrating Mahmood's (2005) theory of embodied piety, offering a robust account of how religious knowledge becomes moral disposition in gendered Islamic institutions. This integration addresses a key limitation of the Glock-Stark model — its descriptive rather than explanatory orientation — by showing that the five dimensions develop not through instruction alone but through embodied practices, affective orientations, and disciplinary regimes that shape religious subjectivity over time. This contribution responds to recent calls for theorizing gender-responsive *fiqh* as a distinct pedagogical tradition rather than a derivative of general Islamic education (Anshor & Muttaqin, 2022; Nurjanah & Nur, 2022), and it situates the study within broader debates on Islamic legal reasoning and pedagogical renewal in contemporary *pesantren* (Abdullah et al., 2026; Saefudin & Berdiati, 2026).

Empirically, the study systematically examines women's *fiqh* pedagogy within a *Muhammadiyah tahfidz pesantren*, responding to calls for research that situates gender-responsive Islamic education within specific institutional and ideological contexts (Hefner, 2020; van Bruinessen, 2021). The finding that the *pesantren* negotiates tensions between classical jurisprudential texts and contemporary realities through *manhaj tarjih* offers a concrete example of how modernist Islamic institutions approach gender-responsive religious instruction. This example contrasts with the traditionalist Salaf model that has dominated the literature. This empirical contribution extends Muafiah et al. (2024) on female agency in *pesantren* and Yaakob et al. (2025) on *fiqh* pedagogy in Malaysian secondary schools, showing that structured, text-based women's *fiqh* instruction can address some pedagogical gaps while also revealing persistent challenges in knowledge internalization.

Practically, the study offers an empirically validated model for gender-responsive character education. For *pesantren* practitioners and curriculum developers, integrating

classroom instruction with dormitory-based habituation, modeling, and supervision provides a replicable pedagogical framework that other institutions can adapt. For policymakers, the findings support integrating gender perspectives into Islamic education curricula, suggesting that gender-responsive religious instruction not only advances equity goals but also improves educational effectiveness. These practical implications are particularly timely given the growing policy attention to character education and gender equity in Indonesian Islamic education (Kementerian Agama RI, 2023).

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment and point toward future research. The single-case design, while enabling in-depth understanding, limits generalizability; findings reflect the specific context of one *Muhammadiyah tahfidz pesantren* and may not transfer directly to other institutional types. The cross-sectional design prevents definitive causal attribution. At the same time, findings suggest that women’s *fiqh* learning contributes to character formation; other factors—maturation, peer influence, other educational experiences—may also have contributed. Reliance on self-report data for belief and religious experience dimensions introduces potential social desirability bias, which observational and administrator data may mitigate but not eliminate. Future research should employ comparative designs across diverse *pesantren* traditions (*Muhammadiyah*, NU, Salaf, modern), longitudinal designs tracking graduates post-*pesantren*, and quantitative validation of religiosity scales (Huber & Huber, 2012) to strengthen the evidence base for the relationships identified in this study.

Ultimately, this study shows that women’s *fiqh* learning, when supported by intentional pedagogical and mentoring strategies within the immersive *pesantren* environment, contributes meaningfully—though unevenly—to female students’ religious character development. The pathway is neither linear nor uniformly successful, but it is pedagogically real, institutionally grounded, and theoretically significant. It invites further inquiry into how gender-responsive religious instruction can be strengthened across diverse Islamic educational contexts, and it challenges the assumption that general religious instruction adequately addresses the character formation needs of female students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors sincerely thank the leadership, teachers, staff, and santriwati of Pondok Pesantren Muhammadiyah Tahfidzul Qur’an Srumbung Magelang for their valuable cooperation during the research period.

DECLARATIONS

Declaration Category	Statement Details
Use of AI Statement	The authors declare that AI tools were utilized solely for document formatting according to the publisher template.
Authors' Contributions	Bagas Ilham Yudhiyantoro led the conceptualization, research design, fieldwork data collection, and initial draft preparation. Rafat Bukola Daud contributed to the theoretical framework alignment, data analysis, and critical manuscript revision. Both authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

Funding Statement	This research received no external grant or agency funding and was independently self-funded by the authors.
Conflict of Interest	The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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