

Fostering excellent learning: exploring madrasa teachers' learning methods into improve students' Islamic behaviors

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Abstract: Research on *pesantren* has been carried out by many researchers, but the use of the Islamic behavior development method in learning processes is still very much neglected. This study, over a three-year period, explored Islamic behavior learning methods in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Using a phenomenological study approach, this research interviewed teachers from five Islamic boarding schools. Data cleaning, transcripts, coding and categorization, and interpretation were chosen for data analysis. This study showed the Islamic behavior learning method of repressing students' *syahwiya* (worldly lust) spirit with habituation in *sunnah* prayers, *qawlan sadidan* (firm words) method, and *qawlan balighan* (right words) method fostering 'iffah (modest), *jud* (generous), and *syaka'* (philanthropic), *amanah* (trustworthy), 'afwu (forgiving), *zuhud* (care about the afterlife), *rahmah* (restore the rights of others), and *hilm* (polite) traits. The learning method in managing *hammiya* (temper tantrum) spirit uses *shiyam* (fast) and *dzikrullah* (meditative prayer to Allah) methods that foster *syaja'ah* (courageous), *jud* (generous), *hilm* (polite), *mujahadah* (persistence), and *sabr* (forbearing) behaviors. Nurturing *mufakkara* (soul thinking) spirit with *al-qisah wa al-tarikh* (method of learning storytelling and history) and dialog methods that bring forth loving-knowledge and *fathanah* (clever)-thinking behaviors. This research presents an implication for the theory of "Islamic behavior learning methods" that must be used by madrasah teachers, in addition to strong discussions in improving the morale of the nation's generation.

Keywords: Islamic behavior, learning method, teacher professionalism, soul spirit, madrasa teachers.

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Introduction

Islamic behavior learning methods are a key factor in the success of Indonesian educational institutions in shaping student personality. A literature review shows that, in addition to knowledge mastery, Islamic behavior is the main objective of every learning activity in Islam. This is reflected in the prophetic mission of Muhammad SAW in this world: teaching mankind to achieve moral maturity (Chapakiya et al., 2025; Darnell et al., 2019; Tomasello, 2018; Luttrell, Philipp-Muller & Petty, 2019; Tambak & Sukenti, 2020). The attainment of mankind's Islamic behavior maturity is more important than knowledge. A morally good person most certainly demonstrates vast knowledge. Thus, the primary objective of Islamic educational learning institutions should be in line with the said prophetic mission.

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To date, several studies exist on the Islamic behavior learning method. Zedan, Yusoff, & Mohamed (2015) used the case study approach in investigating learning method innovation in traditional Malaysian Islamic educational institutions by introducing. Lubis et al. (2011) employed the descriptive approach in studying teaching Islamic education from the African teachers' opinion. Dacholfany (2015) revealed the leadership style of teachers (clerics) in character education as well as the process to produce competent believers. Religion-paternalistic leadership is based on the value of total admission of religious and educational methods. This study was performed in Gontor Islamic Boarding School with a case study approach. Another research study was on the role of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in moral development in the globalization era using a case study approach, a study on the fostering of *tasawwuf* values on moral development (Abdullah et al., 2025; Sonhaji, 2015; Eryong, & Li, 2021; Yunidar, 2016; Wong, et. al 2020; Habiburrahman, 2017). Ganjvar's (2019) research shows the efficiency and effect of spiritual education on improving children's communication behavior with followers of other religions through the presentation of an Islamic model derived from the al-Quran and prophetic traditions, with a descriptive analytic approach.

While various studies on *pesantren* have been conducted, the methods of learning Islamic behavior contained in them have not been fully organized. As a result, the formation of Islamic behavior in *pesantren* is still experiencing several obstacles. Madrasa teachers in various Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia are still not able to develop Islamic behavioral learning methods in the learning process and only rely on lecture and discussion methods in lessons in the *pesantren* environment (Amalia et al., 2026; Kamal & Ghani, 2014; Biesta, 2020). Meanwhile, *pesantrens* exhibit universal values in building the Islamic behavior of students. *Pesantrens* created core groups of experts who contributed to building the nation in the fields of religious knowledge as well as general science (Thambu, Prayitno, & Zakaria, 2021; Parinduri, Karim, & Lestari, 2020; Tambak, Ahmad & Sukenti, 2020).

Another important dimension concerns teachers' exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*), which remains one of the strongest predictors of students' Islamic behaviors. Recent empirical evidence indicates that students develop positive religious conduct more effectively when teachers consistently demonstrate integrity, humility, patience, compassion, discipline, and sincerity during instructional interactions. Teacher modeling creates authentic moral learning opportunities because students observe, imitate, and internalize ethical behaviors that are consistently demonstrated throughout classroom and school activities rather than merely communicated verbally (Ruswandi, 2025; Syaputra et al., 2025; Masfufah, 2026). The integration of digital technology into Islamic education has also reshaped contemporary learning methods without diminishing the central role of teachers in moral education. Rather than replacing teachers, educational technologies provide opportunities to enrich Islamic learning through interactive media, multimedia resources, collaborative platforms, and reflective digital activities that support students' engagement and motivation. Nevertheless, successful technology integration depends upon teachers' pedagogical competence to maintain Islamic ethical values while utilizing digital resources responsibly and meaningfully (Husni et al., 2026; Masfufah, 2026; Arif et al., 2023).

The phenomenon of poor Islamic behavior of students (such as lack of generosity, lack of empathy, lack of respect for others, less attention to the environment, and other bad attitudes) is a worrying matter, demanding reconstruction of learning methods in the Indonesian national education system (Tambak & Sukenti, 2020). *Pesantren*, as the oldest educational institution in Indonesia, is deemed to exhibit relatively richer learning traditions compared to other Islamic formal educational institutions in developing student Islamic behavior consistently across ages. Therefore, *pesantren* educational institutions represent a mature learning model (Tambak, Humairoh, Noer & Ahmad, 2020; Guenther et al., 2020). This is an example of "local genius" that well illustrates the originality of *pesantrens*' anthropologically priceless learning methods (Hilmy, 2016; Benveniste, et. al 2019; Irham, 2015; Solihin, Hasanah, & Fajrussalam, 2020). *Pesantrens*, in addition to teaching various fields of knowledge, also position themselves as a comfortable place to internalize moral values in students. This character education, which is a concern for the Indonesian government, becomes increasingly relevant in the globalization disruption era because *pesantren* implement full-time activities that are controlled systematically. On the other

side, theoretically, this learning method is not deemed to be capable of realizing Islamic behavior in National Education in this globalization era. According to Siwiendrayanti et al. (2019), changing behaviors is not an easy and simple matter. Therefore, in this era, the construction of the Islamic behavior learning method is urgently needed to perfect students (*insan al-kamil*).

Although previous studies have extensively discussed excellent learning, Islamic learning models, and character education independently, several important gaps remain. First, most research has examined learning models primarily from the perspective of instructional effectiveness rather than investigating how madrasa teachers strategically integrate multiple learning methods to cultivate students' Islamic behaviors. Second, existing studies generally focus on either academic achievement or religious instruction without sufficiently explaining the pedagogical mechanisms through which excellent learning contributes to sustainable behavioral transformation. Third, empirical investigations rarely examine the dynamic relationship between excellent learning environments, teachers' pedagogical practices, and students' Islamic behaviors within authentic madrasa contexts. Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by exploring madrasa teachers' learning methods as pedagogical processes that foster excellent learning and promote students' Islamic behaviors in contemporary Islamic education.

Thus, this research asks how can the Islamic behavior learning method in the *pesantren* implement the repression of *syahwiya* (worldly lust) and *hammiya* (anger) soul's powers and nurture *mufakkara* (soul thinking) power. The purpose of this study is to explore an Islamic behavior learning method in *pesantren*. This study represents many interests that are expected to contribute to exploring the Islamic behavior learning method for teachers in *pesantren*. The results of this study are expected to help the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia in making policies by applying Islamic behavior learning methods in madrasahs and *pesantren* in Indonesia to control the challenges of the globalization era.

Literature review

Excellent learning

Excellent learning has become one of the central paradigms in contemporary educational research because it emphasizes meaningful, holistic, and sustainable learning experiences that simultaneously promote students' cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social development. Rather than measuring educational success solely through academic achievement, excellent learning integrates instructional quality, learner engagement, higher-order thinking, collaboration, reflection, and authentic learning experiences that enable students to transfer knowledge into everyday life. Recent systematic reviews indicate that excellent learning environments are characterized by student-centered pedagogy, adaptive instructional design, technology integration, and continuous assessment practices that foster lifelong learning competencies and meaningful educational outcomes (Arif et al., 2023; Husni et al., 2026; Ruswandi, 2025). Within Islamic education, excellent learning extends these dimensions by incorporating spiritual growth, moral responsibility, and religious commitment as inseparable components of educational excellence, thereby aligning pedagogical effectiveness with the holistic objectives of *tarbiyah*.

The literature further demonstrates that excellent learning depends substantially on teachers' instructional competence in designing interactive learning environments that encourage inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and authentic participation (Arif et al., 2023; Husni et al., 2026; Musthofa, 2025). Teachers are therefore expected to move beyond transmissive teaching toward pedagogical approaches that facilitate students' active construction of knowledge and values. Such learning environments enhance motivation, engagement, and behavioral transformation because students experience learning as personally meaningful rather than merely fulfilling curriculum requirements. This pedagogical transformation is particularly significant within madrasahs, where educational excellence encompasses intellectual achievement alongside ethical and spiritual development.

Madrasa teachers' learning methods

Learning methods employed by madrasa teachers constitute the pedagogical foundation through which Islamic knowledge is translated into students' religious understanding and behavioral development. Contemporary scholarship argues that effective Islamic education

requires teachers to employ diverse instructional strategies—including experiential learning, problem-based learning, cooperative learning, reflective learning, contextual teaching and learning, inquiry-based learning, and blended learning—to accommodate students' diverse learning needs and promote deeper engagement with Islamic teachings (Musthofa, 2025; Ruswandi, 2025; Syaputra et al., 2025). These methods encourage learners to actively construct understanding through participation, dialogue, reflection, and real-life application rather than passive memorization of religious concepts.

Recent systematic reviews reveal that experiential and reflective learning have become particularly influential within Islamic education because they enable students to internalize Islamic values through authentic experiences and continuous self-evaluation. Likewise, collaborative learning strengthens interpersonal skills such as cooperation (*ta'awun*), consultation (*shura*), empathy, and mutual respect, while contextual learning connects Qur'anic teachings with students' everyday experiences (Arif et al., 2023; Husni et al., 2026; Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2026). Technology-supported instruction further enriches learning by facilitating interactive resources, digital collaboration, and personalized learning experiences without diminishing teachers' central role as moral educators. Consequently, madrasa teachers increasingly function as instructional designers who integrate multiple pedagogical approaches to achieve both academic excellence and character formation.

Students' Islamic behaviors

Students' Islamic behaviors refer to the consistent manifestation of Islamic moral values, religious commitment, and ethical conduct in daily life. These behaviors encompass honesty (*sidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), discipline, respect, compassion, responsibility, cooperation, modesty, worship practices, and social responsibility that collectively reflect the internalization of Islamic teachings (Arif et al., 2023; Musthofa, 2025; Husni et al., 2026). Contemporary Islamic educational research increasingly conceptualizes Islamic behavior not merely as ritual observance but as the integration of cognitive understanding, spiritual awareness, emotional regulation, and ethical action across various social contexts. Such behavioral development represents one of the primary objectives of madrasa education because it reflects the successful transformation of religious knowledge into authentic character (Ruswandi, 2025; Syaputra et al., 2025; Masfufah, 2026).

Recent studies indicate that students' Islamic behaviors develop most effectively when moral instruction is embedded within meaningful learning experiences rather than delivered through isolated doctrinal instruction. Teacher role modeling (*uswah hasanah*), reflective dialogue, collaborative learning, experiential activities, and consistent religious habituation significantly strengthen students' moral reasoning and ethical decision-making. Furthermore, supportive school culture, family involvement, peer interaction, and continuous reinforcement create ecological conditions that sustain Islamic behavioral development beyond classroom instruction (Musthofa, 2025; Abdulah et al., 2025; Fauziah et al., 2025). Consequently, improving students' Islamic behaviors requires comprehensive pedagogical strategies that integrate instructional excellence with authentic moral practice.

Method

Research design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach to explore and interpret madrasa teachers' lived experiences in implementing learning methods that foster students' Islamic behaviors. A phenomenological design was considered the most appropriate methodological framework because the primary objective of this study was to understand the essence and meaning of teachers' lived pedagogical experiences rather than to develop explanatory models or generate substantive theory. Phenomenology enables researchers to investigate how participants perceive, experience, construct, and interpret educational phenomena within their natural settings, thereby revealing the meanings they attach to their professional practices and everyday interactions with students (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). Through this interpretive perspective, the study sought to uncover the underlying beliefs, values, reflections, and pedagogical judgments that influence

teachers' decisions when selecting and implementing learning methods designed to cultivate students' Islamic behaviors.

The phenomenological approach further emphasizes rich descriptions of participants' experiences by encouraging researchers to explore not only 'what' teachers do in the classroom but also 'how' and 'why' they perform particular pedagogical actions within specific educational and socio-cultural contexts. In the context of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), teachers' instructional decisions are inseparable from religious values, institutional traditions, and their professional commitment to nurturing students' moral and spiritual development. Accordingly, this approach provides an appropriate lens for understanding how *ustaz* negotiate pedagogical challenges, integrate Islamic educational values into instructional practices, and continuously adapt their learning methods in response to contemporary educational changes while preserving the fundamental objectives of Islamic character education. By focusing on participants' lived experiences, reflective interpretations, and contextual meanings, phenomenology facilitates a holistic understanding of the complex pedagogical processes through which madrasa teachers foster students' Islamic behaviors in authentic *pesantren* settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016).

Research informan

The study was conducted over a three-year period (2022–2025) in five prominent Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) located in Pekanbaru, Riau Province, Indonesia, namely Darul Hikmah, Babus Salam, Munawwarah, Nurul Huda, and Al-Kautsar. These institutions were purposively selected because they have established reputations for integrating Islamic character education into their educational practices while implementing diverse pedagogical approaches that emphasize students' moral, spiritual, and intellectual development. A total of twelve experienced *ustaz* (religious teachers) participated in this study and were selected using purposive sampling based on three principal criteria: (1) a minimum of five years of teaching experience in *pesantren* education, (2) professional recognition for their contribution to students' character development, and (3) active involvement in designing and implementing learning methods aimed at fostering students' Islamic behaviors. Purposive sampling is considered particularly appropriate in phenomenological research because it enables researchers to recruit information-rich participants who possess substantial lived experience related to the phenomenon under investigation, thereby generating comprehensive and meaningful insights into complex educational practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015).

Data collection

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, which are widely recognized as one of the most appropriate techniques for exploring participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations within phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tracy, 2020; Kallio et al., 2016). Each participating *ustaz* (religious teacher) engaged in three sequential interview sessions, with each interview lasting approximately two to three hours, allowing sufficient time to establish rapport, explore participants' experiences in depth, and clarify emerging issues. Conducting repeated interviews enabled the researchers to capture richer narratives, verify participants' responses across different interview sessions, and strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings through prolonged engagement and iterative questioning (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2020). The interview protocol was adapted from the three-interview phenomenological model proposed by McGrath et al. (2019), which consists of progressive stages that move from participants' descriptions of lived experiences toward critical reflection on the meaning of those experiences. This interview structure is particularly appropriate for phenomenological inquiry because it facilitates comprehensive exploration of participants' pedagogical experiences while encouraging deeper reflection on how these experiences shape professional practice and educational decision-making.

The first interview employed a narrative approach that encouraged participants to recount their personal experiences regarding the learning methods they employed to cultivate students' Islamic behaviors in *pesantren*. Open-ended questions invited teachers to describe instructional strategies, classroom interactions, religious habituation activities, and pedagogical considerations

that guided their efforts to develop students' moral and spiritual character. The second interview explored more deeply how teachers implemented these learning methods within the contemporary educational context, particularly in responding to the opportunities and challenges presented by the era of digital disruption. Participants were invited to explain how they adapted instructional strategies, integrated technological resources, maintained Islamic educational values, and addressed changing student characteristics while preserving the objectives of character education. The third interview focused on participants' reflective interpretations of their pedagogical experiences, encouraging them to evaluate the effectiveness, challenges, and long-term implications of the learning methods they had implemented for strengthening students' Islamic behaviors. This final stage also explored teachers' perspectives on future pedagogical innovation, professional learning, and the sustainability of Islamic character education in contemporary pesantren, thereby enabling the researchers to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the meanings that teachers attached to their lived pedagogical experiences (McGrath et al., 2019; van Manen, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data analysis

The data analysis proceeded through several stages, namely data cleaning, transcripts, coding and categorization, and interpretation (Netolicky & Barnes, 2018; Holland, 2019; Merriam 1998; Miles & Huberman 1994; Patton 2002). Each evening following data collection, the researchers parsed the information to determine relevance. After the data were cleaned, we made verbatim transcriptions and translated them into Indonesian. I coded the transcripts, grouped them into themes, and compared them across phenomena. The themes that most often arise from the three issues include (a) learning methods in educating the soul's power of *mufakkara* (soul thinking), (b) learning methods in repressing the soul's power of *hammiya* (temper tantrum), and (c) learning methods for the soul's power of *syahwiya* (worldly lust). Several sub-themes were identified for each issue. By taking these steps, I succeeded in producing theoretical prepositions from the data about the construction of Islamic behavior learning methods in Indonesian pesantren. The data were validated with internal and external validity. Internal validity relates to the accuracy of the research design with the results achieved, while external validity relates to the degree of accuracy, whether the research results can be generalized or applied to the population where the sample is taken. Data validation involves learning method experts, madrasa education experts, and moral education experts, including in validating the themes found in the research results.

Results

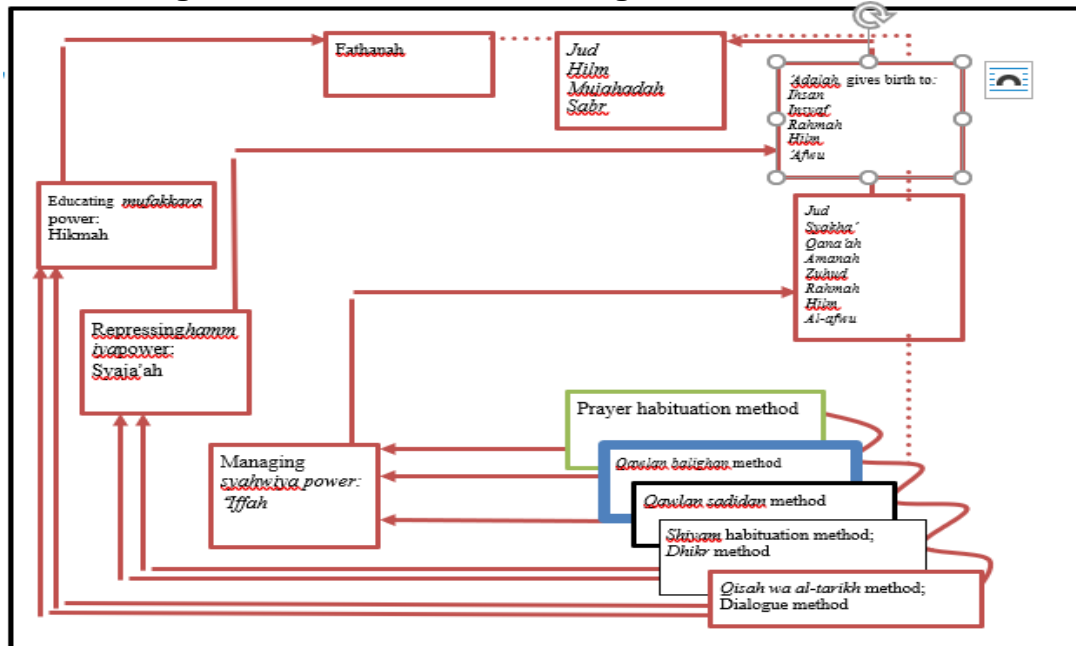
The experiences and reflections of religious teachers and students revealed the dynamic process of developing Islamic learning methods in Islamic boarding schools. Teachers exhibited different experiences, up to new and distinct awareness about themselves in the context of the use of methods to shape the Islamic behavior of students in boarding schools. They not only identified various ways of educating students' morals that demonstrated an impact on them but also engaged in the process in a similar way, which resulted in the credibility and emergence of theory. Theory arouses as the relationship between various concepts combined with an integration framework that explained the phenomenon of Islamic behavior learning methods (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The categories interacted to create a method of Islamic behavior learning as a central category that developed with two sub-centers with seven learning methods. The views expressed and interviews made by religious teachers formed a broad view of what is called learning methods in shaping the Islamic behavior of students. Illustrative quotations from participants were included in each category (see Figure 1).

Learning methods in repressing *syahwiya* (worldly lust) soul's powers

Shaping the Islamic behavior of students began with focusing on the soul's power in human beings, namely the power of *syahwiya* (worldly lust) or so-called lust. Worldly lust was a soul that always put the lust and desires of materialism first and worshiped hedonistic worlds without limits. The *syahwiya* (worldly lust) power must be repressed in life activities with three methods: habituating *sunnah* prayers, *qawlan sadidan* (firm words) method, and the *qawlan balighan* (right

words) method. These three methods give birth to attitudes and acts of virtue “*iffah* (modesty), which in turn encourage *jud* (generosity), *syaka*” (philanthropy), *amanah* (trust), ‘*afwu* (forgiveness), *zuhud* (care about the afterlife), *rahmah* (restore the rights of others), and *hilm* (politeness). It was these virtues that led students into becoming pious individuals.

Figure 1: Islamic Behavior Learning Method in Pesantren



Method of habituating sunnah prayers

All teachers in the Islamic boarding schools felt that the implementation of the sunnah prayer habituation method was very important in shaping the morals of students in their daily lives and repressing the power of *syahwiya*. After the obligatory prayers with students, the teacher applied this method by carrying out a standardized sunnah. This was done to make students aware that the sunnah prayer life would be disciplined, focused, and meaningful. *Sunnah* prayers that were carried out, according to a cleric at the pesantren Babussalam, says “we make students aware of being released from the shackles of the world, such as binding routines, bad habits, and other actions that are sometimes difficult to be break free from” (T1).

The teachers supervised the students so that they always carried out sunnah prayers. The teachers imposed sanctions on every student if they did not perform the sunnah prayers in addition to the obligatory prayers. An Ustaz revealed, “this sunnah prayer rule is enforced to make students aware that the purpose of human life to be close to Allah will make themselves more comfortable and calmer” (2). Another Ustaz said “that this prayer made the students highly motivated in learning, respecting the teacher, respecting others, and complying with the regulations adopted by the boarding school” (T3). Further, the teachers required the midnight prayer to be performed every night. The teachers woke the students up at night to go to the mosque. Although carried out individually, this prayer was done simultaneously in the mosque like prayer in congregation. The Ustaz were at the front but did not act as an imam, and the students were right behind performing the midnight prayer (*tahjud*) individually, at least 8 rakats, plus the *witir* prayer. This midnight prayer was accompanied by a minimum of two rakats of *hajat* sunnah prayer and two rakats of *tasbeeh* sunnah prayer.

Sunnah prayer at night, according to an Ustaz, “was carried out to make students aware that the main purpose of life was to attain glory from Allah, not position in the eyes of humans, and avoid the shackles of a hedonistic and materialistic world” (T4). “The midnight prayer that is held makes the students desires organized and makes me feel more comfortable so that they study harder,” (T5) said an Ustaz. In the morning, students' activities began with the sunnah duha prayer. This sunnah prayer must be performed by all students without exception. Also, this prayer

was held in the mosque together but not in the congregation. The implementation of the *duha* prayer (morning prayer) that kick started learning activities in the morning was intended so that students demonstrate a sincere, clean, obedient, religious, and highly motivated spirit to participate in learning activities.

With the implementation of the *method of habituating sunnah prayers*, the power of *syahwiya* (worldly lust) was significantly repressed so as to give birth to noble deeds, namely *'iffah* (modesty). These *'iffah* (modest) virtues gave birth to other virtuous deeds. These actions were reflected in the daily life of students. They showed a *jud* (generous), *shakha'* (philanthropic), *qana'ah* (willing), *amanah* (honest), *wara'* (salih), *zuhud* (care about the afterlife), *rahma* (desire to restore the rights of others), and *hilm* (polite) attitude. A teacher revealed "with the implementation of the obligatory prayers and organized sunnah in our school, the students very happy to help troubled friends, enjoy the school life simply, and pay more respect to teachers and parents" (T4).

Qawlan sadidan (firm words) method

The teachers implemented the *qawlan sadidan* (firm words) method in shaping students' morals. Almost all teachers in Islamic boarding schools stated that students need to be given important messages with firm words. This method was used by teachers when they found students who violated Islamic boarding school norms such as late prayer, not performing sunnah prayers, duha, and others. Also, this method was used by teachers both in the classroom and outside the classroom in everyday life in the school environment. According to an Ustaz at al-Kautsar boarding school, "the teachers at this pesantren taught morals to students by giving strict warnings inside and outside the classroom" (T6). From observations, it was seen that a student said something awful in front of his friend. Ustaz immediately advised firmly about the action. A teacher said "the way the Ustaz reprimanded directly with strict language made the student feel watched and motivated to continue doing good" (T7).

A learning method like this was called the *qawlan sadidan* (firm words) method, which was useful for shaping the morals of students in pesantren because it demonstrated a positive impact on behavior change. As a result, students' attitudes and behavior are getting better in everyday life. The implementation of this method made the students develop the characteristics of *jud* (generosity), *amanah* (trust), *'afwu* (forgiving), *rahmah* (restore the rights of others), and *hilm* (polite). An Ustaz at al-Kautsar Islamic boarding school stated that "by using assertive words in every wrong action, the personality of the students has improved from time to time. Every wrong action is immediately reprimanded assertively to be corrected and carried out continuously to make students experience changes in attitude. Now they are increasingly respecting Ustaz, forgiving, are polite in attitude, and are trustworthy in carrying out their duties" (T8).

Qawlan balighan (right words) method

This method was used by teachers in educating Islamic behavior of students, both in and outside the classroom. When teaching *Kitab kuning*, a teacher at the Munawwarah boarding school conveys clearly, effectively, right on target, and is in accordance with the psychology of the students. Teaching material by touching the hearts of students makes them aware to do the things conveyed by the Ustaz. Outside the classroom, the teacher used the gathering spaces to direct students with light material with fluent and effective speech. The teacher conveyed various directions to students in an effective way so that they follow and practice the teachings from the teachers. Fluent, effective, and on-target communication, based on our observations at the Munawwarah boarding school, improved awareness, resulting in them studying harder at night because disciplined studying could withstand drowsiness, and when the Ustaz were around all students would rush to greet and pay respect (T9).

This method is based on the word of God—"speak to them with *qawlan balighan* (firm words)" (Surah al-Nisa, 4: 63). The word "baligh" in Arabic is interpreted as "reach," in regard to a goal or achieving a goal. In regard to learning methods in teaching Islamic behavior, "baligh" means fluent, clear meaning, frank, and precise in expressing what was desired. In accordance with that meaning, then, "the principle of *qawlan balighan* (firm words) could be considered as the principle of effective communication. The communicator was able to adapt his message to the

frame of reference and the field of experience of his audience and touched their heart and mind at the same time" (Bondaharo, Kholil, & Lubis, 2020). Allah SWT said the following: "*and We did not send any messenger except [speaking] in the language of his people to state clearly for them....*" (QS. Ibrahim 14:4).

A teacher said that "we teach the student with good communication and relationship, clear, right on target, and fluent way of teaching touched the student heart and made it easy for them to absorb material. And because of that, by one's own willingness we are called to do good" (T10). "The communication that we develop is by understanding the character of students, making it easy to pick up and carry out messages. Learning is easy to accept and orders to do good can be carried out properly" (T11). Therefore, by touching the audience to their hearts and minds at the same time, the *qawlan balighan* (firm words) method could be implemented well in learning to educate the Islamic behavior of students.

Learning methods in managing the soul's power of *hammiya* (temper tantrums)

Shaping student Islamic behavior began with paying attention to the soul's powers in human beings, namely the power of *hammiya* or temper tantrums. Temper tantrums are a soul that demonstrated the power to always display anger and was very influential on one's attitude. *Hammiya* power was possible to control with two methods, namely the method of *shiyam* (fasting) and *dzikr* (meditative prayer to Allah). The use of these two methods was able to control the power of the *hammiya* (temper tantrum), which gave birth to *syaja'ah* (brave) behaviors. *Syaja'ah* (brave) behavior breeds good deeds such as *jud* (generosity), *hilm* (politeness), *mujahadah* (persistence), and *sabr* (forbearance).

Shiyam habituation method

The teacher used the method of fasting habituation by carrying out compulsory fasting and *sunnah* fasting in managing the power of *hammiya* (temper tantrums). The teacher required all students to carry out the *sunnah* fasting with Monday and Thursday fasting or the fasting of the Prophet Daud. A teacher at the pesantren Nurul Huda trained students to carry out the *sunnah* fasting continuously. This method, according to an Ustaz, "aimed to develop virtuous behaviour so that students could repress the power of the *hammiya* and avoid the shackles of the world to give birth to *syaja'ah* behaviours (courage)" (T12).

The teacher invited all students to eat a meal together, according to the *sunnah* fasting schedule starting between 3:30 and 4:30 in the morning. During sahur, the meals were provided by the boarding school. The teacher made a rule where the school did not provide lunch to all students. In the afternoon, the school provided *ta'zil* (eat to break the fast) for all students. The teacher invited all students to the mosque to hold iftar together in the afternoon. This activity was carried out routinely to foster awareness to students as well as to get closer to Allah SWT. A teacher admitted that "the student[s] felt better because they were able to control the temper tantrum thanks to this *shiyam* (fasting) method" (T13). An Ustaz stated "accustoming *sunnah* fasting to be the main focus and as a method we use to control negative attitudes of students so that they have good attitudes, are independent, work hard, are empathetic, and are happy to help others" (T14). A teacher's confession revealed that "with the application of the *shiyam* (fasting) method, students are more easily managed, respectful to the teacher, and respectful toward each other" (T16).

Dzikr method

Most teachers realized that the *dzikr* (remembrance of Allah) was able to foster calmness in students. The teacher implemented the *dzikr* method by chanting divine recitations in unison. This method was carried out three times every day, after the *Fajr*, *Maghrib*, and *Isha* prayer. The teacher recited the *dzikr* recitation and was followed by the students in unison. It was led by an Ustaz and accompanied by two students who exhibited good voices and articulate pronunciations. This *dzikr* method aimed to promote awareness for students to develop *mujahadah* behaviors. Recitation by reciting various virtuous expressions was able to stimulate peace of mind. Students felt that by reciting various *dzikr*, they are calmer in life. The implementation of *dzikr* with a

variety of recitations was well known to shape self-example and build good relationships between fellow students. (T13)

A teacher at the pesantren Munawwarah said that with this *dzikr* method, “the teacher here always applies *dhikr* together with the students every time they pray as an effort to develop closeness to God. This *dhikr* method is applied by reciting *thayyibah* (the good one) sentences such as *subhanallah* (holy God almighty), *walhamdu lillah* (all praises be to Allah), *allahu akbar* (Allah is the Greatest), and *lailaha illa Allah* (there is no God but Allah). We continue to apply this *dhikr* together with the students so that they demonstrate a soft heart and character, are easy to accept suggestions, and are obedient to Allah and their parents” (9). Dimensions of an inner experience of students were effective in repressing temper tantrums and become the shaper of Islamic behavior in everyday life.

Learning method in nurturing *mufakkara* power

Nurturing the soul's power of *mufakkara* (soul thinking) as a power of thinking that was capable of penetrating the layers of wisdom and secrets of various circumstances required appropriate learning methods. This power was a crucial element because it was able to give birth to a glorious civilization. The *mufakkara* (soul thinking) power must be nurtured in life activities with two methods: *al-qisah wa al-tarikh* and dialog method. The aim was to shape wisdom behavior, which then gave birth to the act of loving knowledge and *fathanah* (clever) thinking.

Al-qisah wa al-tarikh method

In this method, the teacher told noble tales to students to teach knowledge in the classroom and outside the classroom. Telling stories of the history of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, friends, *tabi'in*, and *tabi'it tabi'in* were commonly performed by teachers as a learning method outside the classroom in school environments to foster student Islamic behaviors. Students were fond of this activity. They often gathered on the terrace of the mosque, classrooms, terraces of schools, dormitories, and others, forming a circle to listen to the description of the Ustaz. This could be seen in the pesantren Babussalam, where groups of students were gathered in various places listening to the lessons of the Ustaz after the Isha prayer. The Ustaz tell past exemplary stories to students. The nuances of the beautiful, conducive, and *tawadhu'* (humble) school are very much felt and seen during this *halaqah* (meeting). The students highly respected the Ustaz, and vice versa, the Ustaz highly valued the students so that the *ta'lim* (learning) was full of warmth and kinship with academical value. The relationship between the students and the Ustaz was established humanely, academically, and socially. Students shedding tears when the teacher delivered the teachings was not an uncommon sight.

Thus, the *al-qisah wa al-taikh* (story and history) method was the process of delivering learning material by telling the stories of the Prophet Muhammad and his friends in the past that were adapted to the actual conditions of the students. “I, as Ustaz, teach material by telling the success stories of the prophets and the struggle of the Prophet Muhammad in developing the religion of Allah. This method is most liked by the students, and it can be seen that their hearts are touched so that it seems that they consciously want to improve themselves. The students are motivated by the content of the story, and the way it is told encourages them to apply it in their daily life” (T12), an Ustaz at Nurul Huda Islamic boarding school in Pekanbaru, Indonesia said.

Dialog method

Dialog is activity that teachers in pesantren al-Kautsar were trying to habituate. In a variety of subjects, good dialog must take precedence. Students were encouraged and allowed to share their thoughts related to the material being taught. The dialog took place between Ustaz and students and also between students under the supervision of the Ustaz. The impact, according to an Ustaz, “students are encouraged to dialogue about learning material. Students seem motivated to have a dialogue about the mastery and depth of the material presented. The dialogues are getting better day by day, as evidenced by the increasing breadth of references expressed about the material learned during the dialogue process” (T8).

The dialog method was carried out to develop the soul's power of *mufakkara* (thinking) so that the traits of *ilm* (loving knowledge) and *fathanah* (intelligence) emerge. Exploring the ability

of students to expand knowledge and hone intelligence must be familiarized by discussing the knowledge possessed with others. Consequently, knowledge would flourish, and students would be more active in reading the sources of knowledge such as scientific books in addition to the *Kitab Kuning* they demonstrated at the pesantren. The dialog method encouraged students to respect different opinions. “For me, this dialogue method can develop academic imagination and scientific thinking” (T7), said an Ustaz at pesantren al-Kautsar.

Discussion

This study found several relevant learning methods for Islamic behavior based on experiences carried out by madrasa teachers in pesantren in Indonesia. Shaping the Islamic behavior of students began with focusing on the soul's power in human beings, namely the power of *syahwiya* (worldly lust) or so-called lust. Worldly lust was a soul that always put the lusts and desires of materialism and worshiped hedonistic worlds without limits. The *syahwiya* (worldly lust) power must be repressed in life activities with three methods, namely the method of habituating *sunnah* prayers, *qawlan sadidan* (firm words) method, and the *qawlan balighan* (right words) method. These three methods were able to repress the soul's power of the *syahwiya* (worldly lust), which in turn would give birth to attitudes and acts of virtue 'iffah (modesty). Strengthening the virtue of 'iffah (modesty) with these three methods gave birth to *jud* (generous), *syaka'* (philanthrope), *amanah* (trust), 'afwu (forgiving), *zuhud* (care about the afterlife), *rahmah* (restore the rights of others), and *hilm* (polite) traits. It was these virtues that led students into becoming pious individuals.

The findings of this study, which were corroborated by the results of al-Baqi & Sholiha (2019), stated that the habituation of *sunnah* prayers in pesantren can provide many psychological benefits for Muslims, including reducing stress and increasing subjective well-being, interpersonal sensitivity, and other good effects. Research by Ridha (2015) argued that adolescents who are used to prayer are better at managing time. Other research revealed that habituating *duha* prayer to students was able to increase moral character (generosity) and healthy mental possession in life activities (Ilyasin, 2020; Hafidulloh & Fatonah 2015; Tambak & Sukenti, 2024). The *qawlan sadidan* (firm words) method was very important for teachers to master because it was not uncommon that some teachers were less consistent with the decisions they conveyed. The consequence was that students did not heed the wisdom issued by the teacher, which resulted in bad behavior. For this reason, the *qawlan sadidan* (firm words) method used by the teacher needs to focus on civilized and polite language, *tawadhu'*, calmness, not showing hints of anger, not speaking words of contempt, gentleness, not raising the voice, and trying to attract the hearts of children memorably (Tambak, et. al., 2020; al-Bari, 1967; Noor, 2017).

Mazhahiri (2019) revealed three effective ways of persuasion in influencing humans: ethos, logos, and pathos. Talks that were on target were closely correlated to religion and its laws, sometimes even related to prevailing traditions, and were related to the principles of daily association. This method could stimulate the mind, heart, and behavior of students to internalize and apply directly any material and direction delivered by the teacher in the learning process both in the classroom and outside the classroom. According to research by Riandi, Saepudin, and Surbiantoro (2016), *qawlan balighan* (firm words) was an interaction and communication that left an imprint on the hearts of the listeners. Thus, the *qawlan balighan* method was the delivery of targeted learning so that the message conveyed was converted into acts of virtue by students. Consequently, the material taught by the teacher can imprint and stay within. Worldly lust power of students will be repressed and replaced with *jud* (generous), *shakha'* (philanthropic), *qana'ah* (willing), *amanah* (honesty), *wara'* (salih), *zuhud* (care about the afterlife), *rahma* (desire to restore the rights of others), and *hilm* (polite) traits.

Shaping student Islamic behavior began with paying attention to the soul's powers in human beings, namely the power of *hammiya* or called temper tantrums. Temper tantrums are a soul that demonstrated the power to always display anger and was very influential on one's attitude. *Hammiya* power was possible to control with two methods, namely the method of *shiyam* (fasting) and *dzikr* (*dhikr*). The use of these two methods was able to control the power of the *hammiya* (temper tantrum), which gave birth to *syaja'ah* (brave) behaviors. *Syaja'ah* (brave) behavior breeds good deeds such as *jud* (generous), *hilm* (polite), *mujahadah* (persistence), and

sabr (forbearing). *Sunnah* fasting should be the main focus and as a method we use to control negative attitudes of students so that they demonstrate good attitudes, are independent, work hard, are empathetic, and are happy to help others. With the application of the *shiyam* (fasting) method, students are more easily managed, respectful to the teacher, and respectful toward each other. Hamsyah and Subandi (2017) revealed that *dzikir* is a ritual that is practiced by Muslims in which they pronounce the names of God repeatedly to stimulate enjoyment. *Dzikir* intensity is significantly correlated with subjective well-being.

Nurturing the soul's power of *mufakkara* (soul thinking) as a power of thinking that was capable of penetrating the layers of wisdom and secrets of various circumstances required appropriate learning methods in pesantren. This power was a crucial element because it was able to give birth to a glorious civilization. The *mufakkara* (soul thinking) power must be nurtured in life activities with *tal-qisahwa al-tarikh* and dialog method. The aim was to shape wisdom behavior, which then gave birth to the act of loving knowledge and *fathanah* (clever)-thinking. The stories demonstrated an appeal that could reach children. Stories that contained wisdom were very effective in attracting children's attention and stimulating their brains to work well (Lopes, Mestre, Kremenitzer & Salovey, 2012; Tambak & Sukenti, 2026). This method was also considered effective in stimulating the mindset of children. Because by listening to stories, children's thoughts and emotions were stimulated, so they were interested in absorbing messages conveyed without being forced (Koehler, Ertmer & Newby, 2018; Tambak, 2016; Yin, Yang, & Li, 2020; Yough, Merzdorf, Fedesco & Cho 2017; Ahmad & Tambak, 2018; and Reddy, et. al 2020). Humans demonstrate a natural tendency to like stories, and this exhibits a big influence on human feelings. The Qur'an contains various stories about prophets and apostles as well as previous figures of both those who did and did not believe in Allah SWT. This method was an important factor in education because it sharpened intellect and was very influential in instilling true moral values (Postholm, 2019; Tambak, et al., 2020; Kostania, Kuswati & Ratnawati 2015).

While Ma'arif (2018) established that, in general, four pedagogical learning methods are implemented by Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia (*sorogan*; *wetonan* (collective learning), method of memorizing and *majlis ta'lim*; and method of *mudzakarah*, *musyawarah*, and *bahtsul masail*), they did not touch on how the learning methods are used to develop Islamic behavior of students in pesantren. However, in Ma'arif's (2018) view, varieties of objectives exist when Islamic teacher establishing Islamic institutions called pesantren. In general, the ideal goal of pesantren is personality development for becoming *Muslim and muhsin* (good person). The ultimate objectives of *pesantren* are to educate students to become humans who exhibit personality with religious knowledge and become Muslim preachers in the surrounding communities through science and charity. By studying various religious knowledges in *pesantrens*, such as *nahu*, *shorf*, *mantiq*, *balaghah*, *bayan*, and others, a person has the skills to preach, teach, become a priest, pray in religious activities, and be a religious leader in the community. Pesantren as Islamic religious education is very important to absorb the Islamic values in the formation of *akhlakul karimah*; while the pesantren curriculum is a plan that is programmed by kiai for coaching *aqidah* and *akhlaq*, guidance on aspects of intellectual, psychological, social, and spiritual development of the students (Ma'arif, 2015; Sista, Al Baqi & Budiman, 2019; Muali et al., 2021). In this regard, Tebuireng *Pesantren* in Jombang, Indonesia, example, that the curriculum development is more emphasized on the achievement of "a *pesantren* as a leading institution creating leaders with noble characters" and the development of *pesantren* based on local wisdom (Ma'arif, 2015; Tambak, 2026).

Pesantren education as the oldest educational institution in Indonesia is deemed to demonstrate relatively richer learning method traditions compared to other Islamic formal educational institutions in developing student Islamic behavior consistent across ages. Therefore, pesantren educational institutions, in itself, represent a mature learning model (Tambak, Humairoh, Noer & Ahmad, 2020; Guenther, et al., 2020). This is an example of "local genius" that well illustrates the originality of pesantren' anthropologically priceless learning methods (Hilmy, 2016; Benveniste et al., 2019; Irham, 2015; Solihin, Hasanah, & Fajrussalam, 2020). Pesantrens, in addition to teaching various fields of knowledge, also position themselves to be a comfortable place to internalize moral values to students. This character education, which is a concern for the Indonesian government, becomes increasingly relevant to be implemented in

the disruption era because pesantren implement full-time activities that are controlled systematically. On the other side, theoretically, this learning method is not deemed to be capable of realizing Islamic behavior in National Education, in this globalization era. According to Siwiendrayanti et al. (2019), changing behaviors is not an easy and simple matter. Therefore, in this era, the construction of the Islamic behavior learning method is urgently needed to realize perfect students (*insan al-kamil*).

In the context of Indonesia, in Ma'arif (2019) research, the pesantren as a sub-culture is understood to exhibit a value system in addition to its own central value. With contextual understanding of the *Kitab Kuning* (literally means yellow book) and other contemporary literatures, pesantren communities acculturate local culture with the values of pesantren. As an institution of the original product of the Archipelago, pesantren showed characteristics of *gotong royong* (voluntarily shared work), which is a part of Indonesian tradition. Other values of self-reliance developed by pesantren are independence, cooperation, patriotism, peace, tolerance, consultation, and equality. The goal of the establishment of pesantren is to elevate morality, heighten spirit, and appreciate spiritual values and humanity. Therefore, the idea of reinventing the culture of moderation in pesantren finds its significance to respond to the problems, especially related to culture of anarchism, which always appears one after another in the Republic and always uses the name of pesantren. In addition, the culture of moderation is important for the sake of overcoming a number of humanitarian issues and restoring the face of Indonesian people who were formerly known as religious people and friendly with valuable cultures coming from religion and values of the intellect. For this purpose, pesantren should emphasize the creation of a complete generation, covering not only religious sciences but also social intelligence, such as loving and caring for fellow human beings (Muhajir et al., 2025; Tambak et al., 2026; Nurhayati et al., 2026; Ma'arif, 2019).

In addition, *pesantren* must design an educational system that is indispensable in building the structure of a democratic and civil society. The moderation culture should be realized in every pesantren. In addition to building peace education and saving the future of pesantren's students, all parties and key stakeholders must cooperate with mutual introspection by trying to make smart breakthroughs to counteract all violent movements and vigilantes. Also, pesantren requires a breakthrough in the learning practice to be able to transmit and internalize the expected values and finally create students with noble character. This expectation becomes important because, from the perspective of education, pesantren should serve as a fertile garden where the seeds of kindness grow, rather than vicious hatred by labeling others as infidel and confronting the state. In this regard, the importance of pesantren education and training based on local wisdom is an effort to humanize humans by encouraging them to morality and respecting the tradition that has become cultural identity in society. The process of transmission and internalization of values and education based on local wisdom in pesantren is a place to instill noble manners (*gharsu al-akhlaqi al-fadhilati*) among students (Miratunisa et al., 2026; Ma'arif, 2019). Nevertheless, a limitation of the study is that the findings are merely based on teachers' responses and perceptions. In the future, research on Islamic behavioral learning methods needs to be studied from the perspective of students and also other teachers in Islamic boarding schools. Islamic behavioral learning methods need to be explored again from Islamic boarding schools with experimental research, so that learning methods can be relevant to the development of student behavior. The morals of students are getting better, and this makes pesantren the main place in developing Islamic behavior of students among other educational institutions in the world.

Conclusion

This study produces three Islamic behavior learning methods for students to repress *syahwiya* power: *sunnah* prayer habituation, *qawlan sadidan* (firm words), and *qawlan balighan* (right words). Simultaneous use of these three methods leads to the emergence of *'iffah* (modest) virtuous behavior, which then gives birth to *jud* (generous), *syaka'* (philanthropic), *amanah* (trustworthy), *'afwu* (forgiving), *zuhud* (care about the afterlife), *rahmah* (restore the rights of others), and *hilm* (polite) traits. The learning methods produced in this study for managing *hammiya* (temper tantrums) power are *shiyam* (fasting) and *dhikr*. The use of these two methods enables the management of *hammiya* (temper tantrums) power, which then gives birth to *syaja'ah*

(*brave*) behaviors. *Syaja'ah* (*brave*) behaviors lead to other virtues such as *jud* (generosity), *hilm* (politeness), *mujahadah* (persistence), and *sabr* (forbearance). Nurturing *mufakkara* (soul thinking) as a thinking power that can penetrate the meanings and secrets of various conditions requires a dedicated method. This power is crucial since it demonstrates the potential to deliver an excellent culture for the nation's development. *Mufakkara* (soul thinking) can be nurtured using two methods: *al-qisah wa al-tarikh* (*storytelling and history*) and dialog methods. The objective is to develop wise behavior, which then gives birth to knowledge-loving and *fathanah* (clever-thinking) behaviors. This study concludes that seven methods of Islamic behavior learning exist to repress *syahwiya* power, *hammiya* (temper tantrums) power, and *mufakkara* (soul thinking), which are *sunnah* prayer habituation, *qawlan sadidan* (firm words), *qawlan balighan* (right words), *shiyam* (*fasting*), *dhikr* (*remember Allah*), *al-qisah wa al-tarikh* (*storytelling and history*), and dialog methods. The implications of this research reinforce the theory of "moral learning methods" that must be used by teachers. To develop students' Islamic behavior, future research is needed in terms of increasing the professionalism of Islamic boarding schoolteachers in Indonesia. In addition, the paradigm and methodology, an important issue in the study of Islamic education, is the philosophy that underlies knowledge, and the issue of developing Islamic behavioral learning methods in Islamic educational institutions needs to be investigated by other researchers in the future. In terms of implementation significance, the results of this study are expected to assist the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia in making policies by implementing Islamic behavioral learning methods for students in madrasas and Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia to continue to face the challenges of the era of disruption.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Contributions of the authors in this article: First author, contributed as concepts and drafters of the article, data analyzers and interpreters; Second author, as the critically revising the article, and editing of the language of manuscript. Third author, as the drafter of the manuscript, collecting data and critically revising the article. Fourth and fifth author, as the drafter of the manuscript, collecting data, writing the manuscript and critically revising the article. All authors agree to take responsibility for all aspects of this work. Both authors contributed equally and approved the final version of the article for publication.

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We declare that the supporting data for this research are fully available in our archives. Access to the supporting data for this research must be done by requesting and obtaining permission by corresponding with the researcher [corresponding author].

Declaration of interests statement

We the authors declare that we have no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. The writing of this paper was carried out together and maintained mutual relations with each other in togetherness, and there was no conflict of interest.

Declaration of use artificial intelligence

We declare that this manuscript did not use generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the manuscript preparation process.

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