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Developing Fiqh Understanding through Bahtsul Masa'il: Textual Literacy and Legal Reasoning in an Indonesian Pesantren

Mengembangkan Pemahaman Fiqh melalui Bahtsul Masa'il: Literasi Teks dan Penalaran Hukum dalam Pendidikan Pesantren Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines how Bahtsul Masa'il contributes to the development of fiqh understanding through textual literacy and legal reasoning in pesantren education. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Hidayah Al-Khodijiyah, Cianjur, involving a pesantren leader, supervisors, and students actively participating in Bahtsul Masa'il. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings reveal that Bahtsul Masa'il is implemented through three interconnected stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Students' fiqh understanding develops through independent exploration of legal sources, argumentative discussions, and scholarly validation by the *mushobih*. The method enhances students' ability to identify legal evidence, explain legal reasoning, appreciate differences of opinion, and relate fiqh principles to contemporary social issues. This study argues that Bahtsul Masa'il functions not merely as a forum for religious deliberation but as a pedagogical model integrating textual literacy, legal reasoning, collaborative learning, and contextual problem-solving in fiqh education.

Keywords: Bahtsul Masa'il; Fiqh Education; Legal Reasoning; Pesantren Education; Textual Literacy

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana Bahtsul Masa'il berkontribusi dalam pengembangan pemahaman fiqh melalui literasi teks dan penalaran hukum dalam pendidikan pesantren. Penelitian menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif di Pondok Pesantren Nurul Hidayah Al-Khodijiyah Cianjur dengan melibatkan pimpinan pesantren, mushohih, dan santri yang aktif mengikuti Bahtsul Masa'il. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan studi dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Bahtsul Masa'il dilaksanakan melalui tiga tahap yang saling terintegrasi, yaitu perencanaan, pelaksanaan, dan evaluasi. Pemahaman fiqh santri berkembang melalui eksplorasi mandiri terhadap sumber hukum, diskusi argumentatif, serta validasi ilmiah oleh mushohih. Metode ini meningkatkan kemampuan santri dalam menemukan dalil hukum, menjelaskan penalaran hukum, menghargai perbedaan pendapat, dan mengaitkan prinsip-prinsip fiqh dengan persoalan sosial kontemporer. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa Bahtsul Masa'il tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai forum musyawarah keagamaan, tetapi juga sebagai model pedagogis yang mengintegrasikan literasi teks, penalaran hukum, pembelajaran kolaboratif, dan pemecahan masalah kontekstual dalam pendidikan fiqh.

Kata Kunci: Bahtsul Masa'il; Pendidikan Fiqh; Penalaran Hukum; Pendidikan Pesantren; Literasi Teks



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INTRODUCTION

Fiqh comprehension is one of the essential competencies that Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) students must develop as a foundation for practicing their religion and providing guidance to society.¹ Such comprehension cannot be adequately cultivated through the memorization of legal rulings, definitions, or juristic opinions alone. Rather, it requires the ability to understand legal evidence (*dalil*), trace legal reasoning, compare scholarly opinions, and formulate legal responses to religious issues emerging within society. In the practice of fiqh learning, students are often able to identify the ruling of a particular issue but remain unable to explain its legal basis, underlying rationale, or relevance to contemporary social contexts. This condition indicates that fiqh education requires an approach that not only emphasizes mastery of content but also develops students' legal reasoning and analytical abilities.

These challenges have become increasingly apparent as contemporary religious issues evolve more rapidly than conventional learning models that primarily rely on teacher-centered instruction. In such circumstances, students are expected not merely to know a legal ruling but also to understand the process through which that ruling is established and to provide arguments that can be academically and religiously justified. Previous studies have shown that learning activities that actively engage students in investigating and discussing legal issues can enhance religious understanding while simultaneously fostering critical and collaborative thinking skills.² This finding suggests that fiqh learning requires educational spaces that allow students to participate directly in the process of understanding and examining religious issues in a deeper and more meaningful manner.

Normatively, the importance of deepening religious understanding is rooted in the concept of *tafaqquh fi al-din*, as emphasized in Qur'an 9:122. This verse indicates that a portion of the Muslim community should dedicate themselves to acquiring profound religious knowledge so that they may guide and educate society.³ This principle is further reinforced by the Prophet Muhammad's statement that "whomever Allah intends good for, He grants understanding of religion" (*yufaqiqihhu fi al-din*). Within the context of Islamic education, the pursuit of religious understanding should not be limited to the transmission of knowledge but should also involve intellectual activities that encourage learners to examine legal foundations, evaluate scholarly opinions, and formulate conclusions responsibly. Furthermore, the principle of consultation (*shura*), which occupies a central place in Islamic intellectual tradition, receives normative legitimacy from Qur'an 42:38, which emphasizes the importance of resolving issues through deliberation and collective consideration.

One learning method that has developed within the *pesantren* tradition and embodies these characteristics is *Bahtsul Masa'il*. This method functions as an academic forum in which religious issues are discussed through the examination of classical Islamic texts, involving argumentation, analysis, and collective efforts to identify legal foundations. From a constructivist perspective, meaningful learning occurs when students actively construct knowledge through social

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- 1 Imam Mujahid, "Islamic Orthodoxy-Based Character Education: Creating Moderate Muslim in a Modern Pesantren in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (December 8, 2021): 185–212, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v11i2.185-212>.
 - 2 Fitrotul Kamilah and Umar Mansur, "Strategies for Implementing Project-Based Learning to Enhance Student Collaboration Skills in Religious Education at the Senior High School Level with a Managerial Approach," *Journal of Educational Management Research* 4, no. 5 (August 3, 2025): 1683–99, <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v4i5.1159>.
 - 3 Najwan Saada, "Educating for Global Citizenship in Religious Education: Islamic Perspective," *International Journal of Educational Development* 103 (November 2023): 102894, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102894>.

interaction, dialogue, and reasoning processes.⁴ These characteristics are clearly reflected in *Bahtsul Masa'il*, where students do not merely receive information from teachers but actively participate in reading references, examining legal evidence, presenting opinions, and formulating conclusions based on collective deliberation.

In addition to serving as a medium for fiqh learning, *Bahtsul Masa'il* contributes significantly to the development of students' critical thinking skills. Previous research has found that the method encourages students to formulate arguments based on authoritative textual references, thereby gradually strengthening their critical thinking abilities.⁵ Through this forum, students are trained to analyze problems, compare different opinions, and evaluate the strength of legal arguments employed in addressing religious issues. Consequently, *Bahtsul Masa'il* is not solely oriented toward finding legal answers but also toward cultivating the intellectual capacities necessary for a comprehensive understanding of fiqh.

The effectiveness of *Bahtsul Masa'il*, however, is influenced by several factors. Studies have found that the success of this method depends on participants' preparedness, the availability of reference materials, and facilitators' ability to manage discussions effectively.⁶ Other studies have observed that the implementation of *Bahtsul Masa'il* continues to face methodological challenges, particularly regarding supervision, participant engagement, and learning evaluation.⁷ These findings demonstrate that the success of *Bahtsul Masa'il* is determined not only by the existence of discussion forums but also by the quality of their implementation and instructional management.

Although numerous studies have examined *Bahtsul Masa'il*, several research gaps remain. First, previous studies primarily focused on the contribution of *Bahtsul Masa'il* to enhancing religious understanding and students' fiqh comprehension but did not thoroughly explain how the method is implemented across the stages of planning, execution, and evaluation.⁸ Second, existing research has concentrated on the development of critical thinking skills, leaving aspects of fiqh comprehension—such as understanding legal evidence, explaining legal reasoning, and relating legal rulings to social realities—largely unexplored.⁹ Third, while prior studies have examined factors influencing the effectiveness of *Bahtsul Masa'il*, empirical investigations of its implementation at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Hidayah Al-Khodijiyah Cianjur remain unavailable.¹⁰ Therefore, this study seeks to examine comprehensively the implementation of

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- 4 Miia Rannikmäe, Jack Holbrook, and Regina Soobard, "Social Constructivism—Jerome Bruner," in *Science Education in Theory and Practice*, 2020, 259–75, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-43620-9_18.
 - 5 Qian Wang and George E. Newell, "Teaching and Learning Argumentative Writing as Critical Thinking in an EFL Composition Classroom," *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* 51 (April 2025): 100891, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2025.100891>.
 - 6 Imam Shodiq Anshori and Afga Sidiq Rifai, "Using the Bahtsul Masa'il Method to Nurture Critical Thinking Skills in Santri during Fiqih Lessons at an Najah Gondang Islamic Boarding School Sragen," *At Tuots: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (July 8, 2025): 980–89, <https://doi.org/10.51468/jpi.v6i2.989>.
 - 7 Asrizal Saiin et al., "Islamic Law in Indonesia: Bahtsul Masail Ijtihad and the Production of Knowledge," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Environmental and Energy Policy (ICEEP 2021)*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211014.007>.
 - 8 Ahmad Musadad et al., "The Role of Bahtsul Masail in Improving the Understanding of Jurisprudence of Santri at Manbaul Hikam Islamic Boarding School in Burneh Bangkalan," *NUKHBATUL 'ULUM: Jurnal Bidang Kajian Islam* 11, no. 1 (June 27, 2025): 96–110, <https://doi.org/10.36701/nukhbah.v11i1.1883>.
 - 9 Irfan Musonif et al., "Integrating Multiple Intelligences in Problem-Solving Approaches to Enhance Fiqh Learning for Middle School Students," *Al-Tadzkiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 17, no. 1 (February 18, 2026): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.24042/atjpi.v17i1.30145>.
 - 10 Muhammad Sirojuddin and Ainul Yaqin, "Integrating Heutagogy and Self-Efficacy: Study on Bahtsul Masail-Based Learning Design," *Journal of Pesantren and Diniyah Studies* 1, no. 2 (December 31, 2024): 151–64, <https://doi.org/10.63245/jpds.v1i2.28>.

Bahtsul Masa'il and its contribution to improving students' fiqh comprehension within the context of this *pesantren*.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to describe the implementation of the *Bahtsul Masa'il* method in fiqh learning at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Hidayah Al-Khodijiyah Cianjur, analyze its role in enhancing students' fiqh comprehension, and identify the factors that support and hinder its implementation. This study is grounded in the assumption that *Bahtsul Masa'il* can improve students' fiqh comprehension when implemented systematically through the selection of relevant issues, active guidance from teachers, adequate textual references, equitable student participation, and clear evaluation procedures. Accordingly, this study views *Bahtsul Masa'il* not merely as an intellectual tradition of the *pesantren* but also as a learning strategy that remains relevant to the contemporary need for critical, dialogical, and contextual Islamic education.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive field study design to explore the implementation of the *Bahtsul Masa'il* method in fiqh learning at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Hidayah Al-Khodijiyah, Cianjur, West Java, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, interactions, and meanings constructed throughout the learning process.¹¹ The study was conducted from January to July 2026 at an Islamic boarding school that regularly organizes *Bahtsul Masa'il* as an integral component of its fiqh learning tradition. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their level of involvement, experience, and knowledge regarding the implementation of *Bahtsul Masa'il*. The participants consisted of 11 informants: 1 *pesantren* leader (*kyai*), 2 *Bahtsul Masa'il* supervisors, and 8 students who actively participated in the discussion forums. The *pesantren* leader was selected due to his authority in determining educational policies and learning directions, the supervisors were chosen because of their direct role in facilitating and evaluating the activities, and the students were selected as the primary participants experiencing the learning process and the development of fiqh understanding through *Bahtsul Masa'il*. The inclusion of these participant groups was intended to provide comprehensive perspectives on the implementation of the program.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation was conducted to examine directly the stages of *Bahtsul Masa'il* implementation, interactions between supervisors and students, the use of classical Islamic references, and the dynamics of the discussions. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with all informants to obtain information regarding activity planning, learning strategies, supervisory practices, students' learning experiences, and factors supporting or hindering the improvement of fiqh understanding. Documentary data were gathered from activity schedules, meeting records, *pesantren* archives, photographs, and other documents relevant to the research focus. In this study, the researcher served as the primary research instrument responsible for data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the objectives of the study and voluntarily agreed to participate.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.¹² Data obtained from observations, interviews, and documents were first systematically compiled and transcribed. The data were then reduced by selecting and focusing on information relevant to the implementation of *Bahtsul Masa'il*, the enhancement of students'

11 John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Muantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (4th Ed.)*, Sage Publications, 2014.

12 Matthew B Miles, A Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2019).

fiqh understanding, and the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the program. The reduced data were subsequently organized and presented through narrative descriptions and thematic matrices to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships among findings. The final stage involved drawing and continuously verifying conclusions throughout the research process. To ensure trustworthiness, source triangulation and methodological triangulation were employed by comparing information obtained from different participants and data collection techniques. In addition, member checking was conducted to confirm that the researcher's interpretations accurately reflected participants' experiences and perspectives, thereby enhancing the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the *Bahtsul Masa'il* Method in Fiqh Learning

Fiqh learning in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) is often understood as a process of knowledge transmission centered on the authority of the teacher (*ustadz*) and the mastery of classical Islamic texts. However, the findings of this study indicate that students' understanding of fiqh develops more effectively when they are given opportunities to search for, examine, and defend legal arguments independently. Based on observations, interviews, and document analysis, *Bahtsul Masa'il* functions not merely as a forum for religious deliberation but also as a learning space that encourages students' intellectual engagement in understanding Islamic law. According to KH, the head of the *pesantren*, the primary objective of this activity is not merely to produce legal answers to particular issues but to cultivate students' ability to understand the process of legal reasoning through textual study and scholarly discussion. These findings suggest that active student participation plays a crucial role in developing deeper religious understanding. This result is consistent with research demonstrating that participatory learning enhances conceptual understanding more effectively than approaches focused solely on information delivery.¹³

Interestingly, the learning process within *Bahtsul Masa'il* begins long before the discussion forum takes place. According to KH, MT, and RE, discussion topics are selected through consultation by considering students' needs, their level of competence, and the relevance of the issues to contemporary social realities. Observational data revealed that topics closely related to students' daily experiences attracted greater interest and encouraged more active participation in the search for legal answers. In addition, supervisors prepared classical fiqh references that served as the primary basis for legal argumentation during the discussions. In this context, the planning stage functions not merely as technical preparation but also as a strategy for connecting fiqh studies with the social realities encountered by students. This finding highlights the importance of contextual learning in fostering student engagement. It also supports research indicating that learning materials closely related to learners' experiences tend to generate more meaningful and sustainable learning processes.¹⁴

The findings further reveal that the process of searching for legal answers in *Bahtsul Masa'il* carries greater educational value than the answers themselves. During the implementation stage, students do not immediately receive explanations from the supervisors. Instead, they are required to consult relevant texts, examine pertinent passages (*ibārah*), and discuss their findings

13 Vipul Bhardwaj et al., "Redefining Learning: Student-Centered Strategies for Academic and Personal Growth," *Frontiers in Education* 10 (February 21, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2025.1518602>.

14 Anna Sundermann, Annika Weiser, and Matthias Barth, "Meaning-Making in Higher Education for Sustainable Development: Undergraduates' Long-Term Processes of Experiencing and Learning," *Environmental Education Research* 28, no. 11 (November 2, 2022): 1616–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2022.2069679>.

collaboratively within their groups. According to interviews with AR, MF, and SN, this process helps them understand the rationale underlying a legal ruling rather than merely memorizing its outcome. Observational data likewise showed that each group explored multiple possible answers before determining the argument they considered most convincing. Consequently, the learning process is oriented not only toward obtaining correct answers but also toward developing students' abilities to reason, analyze, and relate textual evidence to practical issues. These findings demonstrate that the process of knowledge construction is as important as learning outcomes themselves. This result is consistent with research that identifies exploration and problem-solving activities as key factors in strengthening conceptual understanding.¹⁵

Differences of opinion that emerged during the discussions constituted another important aspect of the learning process. In many educational settings, disagreement is often perceived as an obstacle that must be resolved quickly. However, observational findings revealed that differing arguments within *Bahtsul Masa'il* encouraged students to examine references more carefully and consider multiple perspectives before presenting conclusions. According to DK, MF, and AR, the existence of differing viewpoints made them more cautious in employing legal evidence and more open to alternative arguments that might be equally persuasive. This situation indirectly fostered critical thinking skills, confidence in expressing opinions, and scholarly attitudes toward intellectual disagreement. These findings indicate that differences of opinion do not necessarily hinder learning but can serve as productive educational resources. The results also support research showing that argumentative discussion and exposure to diverse perspectives contribute significantly to the development of critical thinking skills.¹⁶

Table 1. Stages of the Implementation of the *Bahtsul Masa'il* Method in Fiqh Learning

Stage	Main Activities	Key Findings
Planning	Topic selection, preparation of reference texts, formation of discussion groups	Topics were selected based on students' needs and community issues, making learning more contextual
Implementation	Searching for legal evidence, group discussions, presentation of findings, and intergroup responses	Students actively consulted texts, constructed arguments, and compared legal opinions
Evaluation	Corrections by the <i>mushobih</i> , assessment of participation, text-reading skills, and argument quality	Evaluation emphasized reasoning processes and the development of fiqh understanding

Source: Observation, interview, and documentation data (2026).

As shown in Table 1, each stage of *Bahtsul Masa'il* contributes differently to the development of students' fiqh understanding. The planning stage prepares students for learning and connects discussion topics with social realities; the implementation stage provides opportunities for developing legal reasoning and argumentation; and the evaluation stage strengthens reflection and deepens understanding. The relationship among these stages suggests that the success of *Bahtsul Masa'il* is determined not by a single activity but by the integration of the entire learning process. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of fiqh learning is influenced more by the

15 Yanjie Song, "Improving Primary Students' Collaborative Problem Solving Competency in Project-Based Science Learning with Productive Failure Instructional Design in a Seamless Learning Environment," *Educational Technology Research and Development* 66, no. 4 (August 5, 2018): 979–1008, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-018-9600-3>.

16 Teun J. Dekker, "Teaching Critical Thinking through Engagement with Multiplicity," *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 37 (September 2020): 100701, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2020.100701>.

quality of students' learning experiences than by the quantity of material delivered. This conclusion is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of process-oriented learning in improving understanding and higher-order thinking skills.¹⁷

The role of the *mushobib* emerged as another crucial factor in the effectiveness of *Bahtsul Masa'il*. Based on interviews with MT and RE, the *mushobib* is responsible not only for correcting inaccurate answers but also for guiding students in reading texts, interpreting *ibārah*, and constructing legal arguments systematically. Observations showed that corrections were generally provided only after all groups had presented their findings, allowing students to develop their reasoning independently. These findings suggest that the authority of the supervisor is not exercised to dominate discussions but rather to ensure that the learning process remains within academically and religiously valid boundaries. This study extends findings that identify facilitators as important factors in collaborative learning by demonstrating that supervisors also serve as guardians of scholarly validity and legal argumentation. Consequently, the presence of a *mushobib* distinguishes *Bahtsul Masa'il* from ordinary discussion-based learning models that lack clear mechanisms for validating academic arguments.

Overall, the implementation of *Bahtsul Masa'il* demonstrates that fiqh understanding is not developed through the memorization of legal rulings alone but through students' active engagement in reading, reasoning, discussing, and defending arguments based on authoritative references. The findings reveal that fiqh learning can be conducted in an active, dialogical, and contextual manner without abandoning the scholarly traditions of the pesantren. In practice, students learn not only the legal ruling itself but also the process through which it is established, the reasoning that underlies it, and the possibility of legitimate differences of opinion among scholars. These findings reinforce research indicating that dialogue-based and problem-solving-oriented learning contributes significantly to the development of conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking skills. Therefore, *Bahtsul Masa'il* should be understood not merely as a tradition of religious deliberation but as a learning model that integrates textual literacy, legal argumentation, and the cultivation of legal reasoning within a coherent educational process.

Enhancing Students' Fiqh Understanding through the *Bahtsul Masa'il* Method

Fiqh understanding is often measured by students' ability to provide answers to legal questions posed by teachers. However, the findings of this study indicate that fiqh understanding encompasses more than merely knowing the correct answer. It also includes the ability to comprehend legal foundations, explain the reasoning behind a ruling, and relate legal principles to issues encountered in society. Based on interviews with KH, MT, RE, and several students, *Bahtsul Masa'il* offers a learning experience that differs from fiqh instruction centered solely on content delivery. Rather than passively receiving explanations, students actively engage in the process of searching for legal evidence and constructing legal arguments. These findings suggest that active learner participation is a crucial factor in fostering deeper religious understanding.

Interestingly, improvements in fiqh understanding were first reflected not in students' ability to provide legal answers, but in the way they approached and analyzed legal issues. According to interviews with AR, MF, and SN, they found it easier to understand fiqh-related problems after regularly participating in *Bahtsul Masa'il*. Observational findings revealed that before presenting an answer, students first examined the issue, identified its central problem, and connected it to discussions found in the relevant classical texts. This process enabled them to recognize that every legal issue possesses a particular context and rationale that must be carefully considered.

17 Noopur Joshi and Siu-Kit Lau, "Effects of Process-Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning on Approaches to Learning, Long-Term Performance, and Online Learning Outcomes," *Interactive Learning Environments* 31, no. 5 (July 4, 2023): 3112–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2021.1919718>.

Consequently, fiqh understanding extended beyond memorization of legal rulings and evolved into the ability to analyze problems and relate them to their legal foundations.

Improvement was also evident in students' ability to identify and utilize relevant legal sources. Observations showed that students who regularly participated in *Bahtsul Masa'il* became increasingly accustomed to locating appropriate *ibārah* (textual passages) from classical fiqh books. According to MT and RE, this development was reflected in students' growing independence and reduced reliance on teachers when searching for legal references. Interviews with DK and MF further revealed that they had become more familiar with navigating fiqh texts and understanding legal terminology that they had previously found difficult. These findings demonstrate that the enhancement of fiqh understanding is closely linked to the development of literacy in classical Islamic texts, which serve as the primary sources of learning within the pesantren tradition. This result is consistent with research showing that direct engagement with legal evidence and textual analysis enhances students' ability to comprehend Islamic scholarly literature.¹⁸

In addition to improving students' understanding of texts and legal foundations, *Bahtsul Masa'il* also contributed to the development of their ability to explain and defend legal arguments. Based on interviews with AR, SN, and DK, participation in discussion forums accustomed them to expressing opinions publicly and explaining the rationale behind their arguments. Observational findings indicated that students were not merely required to state a legal ruling but also to explain the relationship between the issue under discussion and the textual references used to support their conclusions. This environment encouraged students to develop a deeper understanding of the material before presenting their views. In other words, the growth of argumentative skills became an integral component of improved fiqh understanding. These findings support research suggesting that discussion and presentation activities strengthen academic communication skills while simultaneously enhancing comprehension of the subject matter.¹⁹

Differences of opinion that emerged during the discussions also played an important role in shaping students' fiqh understanding. Observations revealed that students frequently encountered multiple legal opinions while examining classical references. According to MF, AR, and DK, this situation encouraged them to be more cautious in drawing conclusions and more receptive to alternative viewpoints. Students learned that disagreement is a natural aspect of the fiqh tradition and does not necessarily imply that one position is entirely incorrect. The process of comparing arguments and evaluating the strength of legal evidence enabled students to develop a broader understanding of fiqh and avoid rigid interpretations.

Table 2. Indicators of Improvement in Students' Fiqh Understanding through *Bahtsul Masa'il*

Indicator	Field Findings
Understanding fiqh issues	Students were able to explain discussed issues more systematically
Identifying legal foundations	Students were able to locate and present relevant <i>ibārah</i> from classical texts

18 Dewi Hidayati and Joko Slamet, "Interactive Multimedia via LMS on a Reading Comprehension Course: Enhancing Engagement and Learning Outcomes in Islamic Higher Education," *Journal of Studies in the English Language* 20, no. 1 (April 30, 2025): 95–122, <https://doi.org/10.64731/jsel.v20i1.277426>.

19 Susanne Pelger and Pernilla Nilsson, "Observed Learning Outcomes of Integrated Communication Training in Science Education: Skills and Subject Matter Understanding," *International Journal of Science Education, Part B* 8, no. 2 (April 3, 2018): 135–49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21548455.2017.1417653>.

Explaining reasoning	legal	Students were able to connect legal issues with supporting evidence and arguments
Accepting opinions	differing	Students were able to compare arguments and appreciate diverse viewpoints
Relating realities	fiqh to social	Students were able to connect fiqh discussions with community issues

Source: Observation, interview, and documentation data (2026).

As shown in Table 2, the improvement in fiqh understanding extends beyond the cognitive domain and includes communicative, argumentative, and applicative dimensions. These indicators suggest that the understanding developed through *Bahtsul Masa'il* is more comprehensive than understanding based solely on content mastery. The findings reveal that students not only know a legal ruling but also understand its rationale, are able to explain the reasoning behind it, and can relate it to real-life situations. This conclusion is consistent with research emphasizing that deep understanding is formed when learners actively participate in the process of constructing knowledge rather than merely receiving information.²⁰

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the enhancement of fiqh understanding through *Bahtsul Masa'il* occurs because students are actively involved in every stage of the learning process, from understanding legal issues and identifying legal foundations to constructing arguments and defending their conclusions before others. These findings extend previous studies that have primarily viewed *Bahtsul Masa'il* as a forum for religious discussion or a means of developing critical thinking skills. This study demonstrates that the improvement of fiqh understanding occurs through three principal mechanisms: independent exploration of legal evidence, argumentative discussion, and scholarly validation by the *mushobih*. Therefore, *Bahtsul Masa'il* should be understood not merely as an intellectual tradition of the pesantren but also as a fiqh learning model capable of integrating textual literacy, critical thinking, and legal reasoning within a coherent educational process.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of the *Bahtsul Masa'il* Method

The success of *Bahtsul Masa'il* is often attributed to students' ability to engage in discussion and formulate legal responses. However, the findings of this study indicate that the effectiveness of this method is determined not only by participants' abilities but also by the learning ecosystem that supports its implementation. Based on observations, interviews, and document analysis, the implementation of *Bahtsul Masa'il* at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Hidayah Al-Khodijiyah is influenced by a range of interconnected supporting and inhibiting factors. According to KH, the success of the forum depends not only on students' enthusiasm for learning but also on institutional support, competent supervision, and the availability of adequate reference materials. These findings suggest that discussion-based learning requires a learning environment capable of facilitating continuous interaction, exploration, and knowledge construction.

One of the primary supporting factors is the commitment of the pesantren leadership and supervising teachers involved in *Bahtsul Masa'il*. According to interviews with KH, MT, and RE, this support is manifested through the allocation of time for activities, guidance during discussions, and direction provided before and after the forum sessions. Observational findings revealed that teachers function not merely as supervisors but also as mentors who assist students in understanding legal issues, reading classical texts, and refining weak arguments. In this

20 Doug Lombardi et al., "The Curious Construct of Active Learning," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 22, no. 1 (April 19, 2021): 8–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100620973974>.

context, the teachers act as *mushobih*, ensuring that the discussion remains academically sound and aligned with established fiqh principles. These findings demonstrate that active supervision is a critical factor in maintaining both the continuity and quality of the learning process. This result supports research indicating that facilitators play a significant role in the effectiveness of discussion-based and collaborative learning.²¹

Another supporting factor is the availability of fiqh texts that serve as the primary references during discussions. Observations showed that students actively consulted texts such as *Fatbul Mu'in*, *Fanatut Thalibin*, and other classical fiqh works when searching for legal evidence. According to MT and RE, the availability of these references enables students to formulate responses based on authoritative legal sources rather than personal opinions. Access to these texts also encourages students to develop academic habits related to source exploration and argument verification. Although some books must still be shared among participants due to limited availability, this condition does not diminish their importance as primary learning resources. These findings indicate that access to learning resources is a fundamental prerequisite for developing legal reasoning and argumentative competence.

In addition to teacher support and the availability of reference texts, the pesantren's academic culture also strengthens the implementation of *Bahtsul Masa'il*. Interviews with KH revealed that students are already familiar with activities such as reading classical texts, attending religious lessons, *sorogan*, *bandongan*, and scholarly deliberation. As a result, *Bahtsul Masa'il* is not perceived as a new activity but rather as an extension of an established learning tradition within the pesantren. Interviews with AR, MF, and SN indicated that their prior experience in reading classical texts and participating in discussions enabled them to adapt more quickly to the format of *Bahtsul Masa'il*. Such an academic environment serves as an important foundation for sustaining student participation throughout the learning process. These findings reinforce research suggesting that a strong learning culture plays a vital role in educational success and the cultivation of intellectual habits among learners.²²

Table 3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of the *Bahtsul Masa'il* Method

Category	Factor	Impact on Implementation
Supporting	Support from pesantren leadership and teachers	Discussions become more structured and academically guided
Supporting	Availability of reference texts	Facilitates the search for legal evidence and argument construction
Supporting	Strong academic culture	Accelerates students' adaptation to discussion-based learning
Supporting	Students' learning motivation	Enhances participation and engagement
Inhibiting	Differences in text-reading ability	Uneven participation among students
Inhibiting	Lack of self-confidence	Some students remain passive during discussions

21 Henrike C. Besche et al., "Effective and Engaging Active Learning in the Medical School Classroom: Lessons from Case-Based Collaborative Learning," *Journal of Medical Education and Curricular Development* 12 (January 28, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1177/23821205251317149>.

22 Nur Hanisfatin Rushami Zien, Nurul Azma Abu Bakar, and Rohaizah Saad, "Learning beyond Borders: Lifelong Learning and Learning Culture in Islamic Institutions in the Pursuit of Quality Education," *Quality Education for All* 1, no. 2 (December 16, 2024): 80–93, <https://doi.org/10.1108/QEA-01-2024-0010>.

Inhibiting	Limited time allocation	Discussions are not always conducted in sufficient depth
Inhibiting	Complexity of fiqh issues	Requires additional guidance and explanation

Source: Observation, interview, and documentation data (2026).

As shown in Table 3, the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of *Babtsul Masa'il* do not operate independently but rather influence one another. Interestingly, several supporting factors simultaneously function as mechanisms for overcoming barriers that emerge during the learning process. The role of the *mushobih*, for example, not only helps maintain the quality of discussion but also assists students who struggle with reading classical texts or lack confidence in expressing their views. Thus, the effectiveness of *Babtsul Masa'il* depends not only on the existence of supporting factors but also on the institution's ability to manage challenges that arise during implementation. This finding supports research indicating that the success of an educational method is strongly influenced by an institution's capacity to create an adaptive and supportive learning environment.²³

On the other hand, the study found that differences in students' abilities to read and understand classical texts constitute the most common obstacle in the implementation of *Babtsul Masa'il*. According to MT and RE, students with stronger text-reading skills tend to be more active in locating references and presenting arguments. Conversely, students who struggle with unvocalized Arabic texts often require more time to follow the discussion. Observational findings further revealed that this condition contributes to unequal levels of participation among students. Nevertheless, this challenge does not entirely diminish the benefits of the activity, as the discussion format allows less experienced students to learn from their peers. These findings suggest that academic preparedness is an important prerequisite for learning models based on textual analysis and argumentation.

Another notable obstacle is the lack of self-confidence among some students when expressing their opinions in public discussions. Based on interviews with AR, MF, and DK, several students had identified appropriate legal responses but chose not to speak because they feared making mistakes or being criticized by their peers. This finding indicates that the success of *Babtsul Masa'il* is influenced not only by academic competence but also by psychological factors. In discussion-based learning environments, self-confidence serves as an essential asset because even strong arguments provide limited educational value if they are not communicated. Therefore, creating an open and supportive atmosphere that values learning processes is crucial. These findings reinforce research showing that affective factors significantly influence students' participation in discussion-oriented learning activities.²⁴

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the success of *Babtsul Masa'il* is not determined by the method itself but by the existence of a supportive learning ecosystem. Leadership support, teacher involvement, access to reference materials, the pesantren's academic culture, and students' learning motivation collectively contribute to an effective learning process. Conversely, disparities in text-reading ability, limited self-confidence, time constraints, and the complexity of fiqh issues represent challenges that require continuous management. These findings extend perspectives that have traditionally viewed *Babtsul Masa'il* merely as a forum for religious discussion by demonstrating that its effectiveness is shaped by the interaction of

23 Wadim Strielkowski et al., "AI-Driven Adaptive Learning for Sustainable Educational Transformation," *Sustainable Development* 33, no. 2 (April 3, 2025): 1921–47, <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.3221>.

24 Mitja Dečman, Maja Klun, and Janez Stare, "Online Flipped Classroom in University Social Science Courses: Impact on Student Experience and Success," *Computers and Education Open* 8 (June 2025): 100261, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeo.2025.100261>.

pedagogical, academic, social, and institutional factors. Therefore, strengthening the pesantren learning ecosystem is essential to ensuring that *Bahtsul Masa'il* functions optimally as a method for enhancing students' fiqh competence.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of the *Bahtsul Masa'il* method at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Hidayah Al-Khodijiyah is carried out through three interconnected stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. The effectiveness of the method lies not merely in the discussion forum itself but in the systematic process through which students are encouraged to identify legal issues, examine classical references, construct arguments, and defend their conclusions in a scholarly setting. As a result, students' fiqh understanding develops beyond the level of memorizing legal rulings and extends to the ability to understand legal reasoning, identify textual evidence, explain legal arguments, appreciate differences of opinion, and relate fiqh discussions to contemporary social realities. These improvements occur because students actively participate in the process of legal inquiry rather than passively receiving completed explanations from teachers. The findings further indicate that the success of *Bahtsul Masa'il* is supported by the involvement of pesantren leaders and teachers, the availability of reference texts, a strong academic culture, and students' learning motivation, while differences in textual literacy, limited self-confidence, time constraints, and the complexity of legal issues remain significant challenges.

This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that *Bahtsul Masa'il* should not be understood merely as a traditional forum for religious deliberation or a medium for developing critical thinking skills, but also as a pedagogical model that integrates textual literacy, legal reasoning, collaborative learning, and contextual problem-solving within fiqh education. The study further highlights that improvements in fiqh understanding emerge through three key mechanisms: independent exploration of legal sources, argumentative discussion, and scholarly validation by the *mushobih*. Nevertheless, this research is limited by its focus on a single pesantren and its reliance on qualitative findings that may not fully represent the diversity of *Bahtsul Masa'il* practices in other institutional contexts. Future studies are therefore encouraged to involve multiple pesantren, employ comparative or mixed-method approaches, and examine the long-term impact of *Bahtsul Masa'il* on students' legal reasoning, critical thinking, and religious literacy. Such efforts would provide a broader understanding of the role of *Bahtsul Masa'il* in contemporary Islamic education.

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