



Analysis of Fiqh Learning Materials on Hajj and Umrah

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Abstract

This study comprehensively examines the problems and determining factors of Fiqh Learning Problems in Hajj and Umrah Material among Students. This study was conducted at Al-Bi'tsatul Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School. The research method used was descriptive qualitative research with a case study approach. Data collection techniques in this study included observation, interviews, and documentation. The informants in this study were eighth-grade fiqh teachers, eighth-grade students, and the deputy head of the pesantren's 'Tsanawiyah. Data validity was ensured using source triangulation. The results of this study indicate that students have difficulty understanding the material on Hajj and Umrah due to the complexity of the rituals, limited learning media, and the dominance of lecture methods that are not interactive. The contributing factors include teachers' teaching experience that has not been balanced with innovation, limited time allocation, low student interest in learning, and a lack of facilities and infrastructure such as a miniature Kaaba. This study is expected to contribute to improving the quality of fiqh learning on hajj and umrah material in Islamic boarding schools.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education plays a central role in shaping students' understanding and experience of worship. One important aspect of Islamic religious education is the study of fiqh, which not only emphasizes students' cognitive understanding of Sharia law but also the affective and psychomotor domains through the practice of worship. Among the many subjects in the Fiqh curriculum, Hajj and Umrah are often considered one of the most complex and challenging, both for teachers and students. Hajj, as the fifth pillar of Islam, is a multidimensional act of worship. Hajj and Umrah are a peak spiritual journey, but they also involve very high physical, material, social, and procedural aspects (Az-Zahra et al., 2025; Barkah, 2024; Firmansyah, 2019; Kulsum & Muhid, 2022; Nuruddin et al., 2025).

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This complexity is reflected in the many components that must be mastered, ranging from understanding, legal basis, valid and mandatory requirements, pillars, sunnah, prohibitions, various types of dam (fines), to the chronological order of implementation (which must be performed at specific places and times). A prospective pilgrim must not only understand what ihram, wukuf, tawaf, sa'i, and tahallul are, but also be able to distinguish which are rukun (if omitted, the worship is invalidated), which are wajib (if omitted, a dam must be paid), and which are sunnah (if performed, reward is obtained). Furthermore, they must memorize the strict sequence of rituals, starting from miqat, wukuf in Arafah, mabit in Muzdalifah, throwing jumrah, to tawaf wada. The material for umrah, although simpler in procedure, still has its own complexities and often causes confusion in terms of its differences with hajj. The dense, abstract, and procedural nature of this material requires learning strategies that go far beyond lectures and memorization (Mulkin & Fataruba, 2021; Ritonga & Nadirah, 2022; Wahid, 2019).

Islamic boarding schools, as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in the archipelago, have a strong tradition and authority in the implementation of fiqh education (Ali et al., 2021; Anjani et al., 2025; Muslim, 2021; Putri & Safrizal, 2023; Sadali, 2020). Al-Bi'tsatul Islamiyah Islamic boarding school in Mandailing Natal is one of thousands of Islamic boarding schools committed to producing a generation of Muslims who understand and practice their religious teachings. As a pesantren that integrates formal education into its system, this institution is also subject to the demands of the national curriculum, which often has limited time allocation for religious subjects. Initial observations conducted by the researcher indicate a gap between the ideal demands of learning fiqh on the subject of Hajj and Umrah and the practical reality in the field.

Eighth-grade students, who according to Piaget's theory are in the formal operational stage of cognitive development (ages 12-15), where they are beginning to be able to think abstractly and logically, actually show significant difficulties in understanding the abstractions and procedural logic of the Hajj rituals. There are two main factors contributing to this difficulty. First, the limitations of learning media, which make descriptions of the Kaaba, Arafat, and Mina remain imaginary and difficult to comprehend. Second, the dominance of conventional learning methods (lectures) that do not provide space for students to actively build their own understanding through simulated experiences. The research gap that forms the basis of this study is the lack of specific and in-depth studies addressing the problems of teaching fiqh material on Hajj and Umrah in Islamic boarding schools. Studies tend to discuss the problems of teaching fiqh in general without exploring in depth the unique challenges presented by Hajj and Umrah material.

In addition, to date, no research has been found that specifically examines this issue at Al-Bi'tsatul Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School. Therefore, this study aims to fill this academic gap by conducting an in-depth identification and analysis of the issues and factors causing the learning of fiqh material on Hajj and Umrah. The novelty of this research lies in its in-depth case study approach, which not only describes surface phenomena but also attempts to reveal the dynamic and multidimensional interactions between complex material characteristics, teachers' pedagogical limitations, the context of the curriculum and pesantren institutions, and the psychological characteristics of students.

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because of its ability to explore and understand social phenomena in depth in the words and views of the research subjects themselves (Engkizar, et al., 2025; Febriani et al., 2020; Oktavia et al., 2024; Sabrina

et al., 2022; Ummah et al., 2025). The case study design allows researchers to explore the reality of the problems of learning fiqh material on Hajj and Umrah holistically and contextually in its natural setting, namely within the environment of the Al-Bi'tsatul Islamiyah Islamic boarding school. This study does not aim to generalize the findings but to gain a rich and deep understanding of specific cases. This study was conducted at the Al-Bi'tsatul Islamiyah Islamic boarding school. This location was chosen purposively, considering that this pesantren is the only one in the eastern region of Panyabungan that provides formal education at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level and has an eighthgrade class that is studying hajj and umrah material (Akem et al., 2025; Akmal et al., 2024; Engkizar et al., 2022; Guspita et al., 2025; Ikhwan et al., 2023; Khairunisa et al., 2025; Mutathahirin et al., 2022).

The research subjects consisted of three groups of informants. Teachers were the primary source of data on planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning. Students were selected purposively to represent varying levels of understanding (high, medium, low) (Engkizar, et al., 2025). Their names were kept confidential and replaced with initials. The third group consisted of boarding school administrators. Data collection was conducted using triangulation with three main techniques: non-participatory observation during the learning process. In-depth and structured interviews with all research subjects, and a documentary study of the curriculum, syllabus, textbooks, and boarding school profiles. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, where data from interviews with teachers, students, and the deputy head of Tsanawiyah were cross-checked for consistency or differences in perspective. The data were analyzed interactively following the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Engkizar et al., 2024; Hilmi et al., 2024; Htay et al., 2025; Istiqamah et al., 2024; Mustafa et al., 2025; Okenova et al., 2025; Wati et al., 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research and discussion comprehensively examine the problems and factors involved in teaching Fiqh material on Hajj and Umrah to students.

Problems in Learning Fiqh Material on Hajj and Umrah

Based on interviews, observations, and documentation conducted at Al-Bi'tsatul Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School, three main problems were found in learning fiqh material on Hajj and Umrah (Munib, 2022).

Difficulty Understanding the Complexity of the Material

The research findings show that students experience profound difficulties in understanding the essence and sequence of Hajj and Umrah rituals. The complexity of the material, which includes many stages, technical terms, and legal classifications (rukun, wajib, sunnah), is a major source of confusion. This was conveyed by informants as follows

I am confused about the difference between the pillars and obligations of Hajj because there are too many. Sometimes I confuse the pillars and obligations of Hajj and Umrah. Not only that, I also often forget the terms miqat, wukuf, and tawaf (Informant).

This statement is reinforced by another informant who highlights the issue of procedural memory, as conveyed by the informant as follows

"There are too many stages in the hajj and umrah, and I often forget the sequence. Sometimes I remember the tawaf but forget how many rounds, or I remember the sa'i but am confused about whether to start from Shafa or Marwa (Informant).

"The majority of students cannot distinguish between the pillars, obligations, and sunnah of Hajj. Because the series of Hajj and Umrah rituals are complex and chronological, they often get confused. Not only do they have trouble distinguishing between them, but students also often forget the stages of Hajj and Umrah rituals (Informant).

"It is true that the material on Hajj and Umrah is very complex for children their age. I often see them confused when asked about the differences between ifrad, qiran, and tamattu' Hajj. The biggest challenge is how to make students understand something they have never seen directly. Unlike the material on prayer or fasting, which they can practice daily, Hajj and Umrah are like stories that are far from their reality (Informant)."

Learning Methods Lack Variety

Classroom observations and interview results reveal that the learning methods used are still dominated by conventional approaches. Teachers use lecture methods accompanied by question and answer sessions and exercises from textbooks. Although this method is efficient in conveying information in a limited time, it is considered ineffective in creating deep and memorable understanding. Student H expressed his hope: "I hope that the material on Hajj and Umrah can be delivered through hands-on practice, accompanied by a miniature Kaaba and wearing ihram clothing, so that it is easier to understand the learning material." This statement indicates a desire for more experiential learning (Nuraiha, 2020; RimahDani et al., 2023).

"We hope that the material on Hajj and Umrah can be delivered through hands-on practice, equipped with a miniature Kaaba and wearing ihram clothing to make it easier to understand the learning material."

This statement indicates a desire for more experiential learning. Teachers are aware of these limitations: this was conveyed by informants as follows

"The learning methods used are limited to lectures, discussions, exercises, and question and answer sessions. Indeed, these methods should not be the only ones used, as there are many other methods available. However, due to time constraints and the complexity of the material, teachers predominantly choose these methods."

He implicitly acknowledges that the demand to complete the material (content coverage) in a limited time is the main reason for the persistence of this method. This provides a systemic perspective:

The use of fiqh learning methods is not limited to lectures; other methods can also be used. Perhaps this method is not effective, but there are learning requirements in accordance with the applicable curriculum, which must be followed, and the existing curriculum is still teacher-centered. The appropriate method should be a simulation of the Hajj rituals, but there is no such program.

The limited availability of learning media is a major obstacle in creating concrete visualizations of the Hajj and Umrah rituals (Shofiyuddin et al., 2025). The main media used are textbooks and static images drawn on the blackboard. The absence of more interactive and representative media, such as miniature models of the Kaaba or documentary videos, makes it difficult for students to imagine the entire worship process. Students describe the situation as follows:

"When learning about Hajj and Umrah, the media and learning tools used are textbooks. Sometimes teachers bring teaching aids, such as scissors in the sub-discussion of taballul, so that the material is easy to understand."

This shows that despite the efforts made, the teaching aids used are still very simple and partial, not representing the entire process. The Fiqh teacher explained the obstacles faced, as conveyed by the informant as follows

"We don't have a miniature Kaaba, so when explaining the learning material, we only use the available facilities. If there is a sub-discussion of the Hajj and Umrah material that requires simple teaching aids, then he will try to provide them. Indeed, this material mostly uses teaching aids. So, whatever he can provide, for example, when explaining the sub-discussion of taballul, he brings teaching aids such as scissors to make it easier to understand. In addition, if the sub-discussion is about tawaf, he only uses pictures on the blackboard as aids."

From a policy perspective, confirming that this is an institutional issue, this is in line with the informant's statement as follows

"We do not yet have specific learning media for Hajj and Umrah material. This is because there is no Hajj program that makes it easier for students to understand this material. Although it is a pesantren educational institution, not all pesantrens have media for Hajj and Umrah material."

Factors Causing Learning Problems

Teacher Factors

Teachers have long teaching experience (10 years), but this experience is not directly proportional to pedagogical innovation. Teachers seem comfortable with the lecture method that has been used for years. This reflects resistance to change or limited access to training in more modern and participatory learning methods (Habibi et al., 2023). Teachers also appear to be stuck in a teacher-centered learning paradigm, where they are the sole source of knowledge, while students are passive.

Curriculum and Time Allocation Factors

The time allocation for Fiqh lessons is only 2 hours (45 minutes each) per week (Indriana et al., 2023). This amount is clearly insufficient to discuss complex material such as Hajj and Umrah in depth, especially if one wants to integrate practical activities or simulations. This was conveyed by the informant as follows

"It is true that the class hours or time allocation for Fiqh learning is only 2 hours. Of course, this is not enough for the material on Hajj and Umrah, because this material is different from other materials such as prayer and fasting. The material on Hajj and Umrah has many stages, not just one or two, so it requires more time to deliver the material."

Teachers are forced to choose the strategy of "cramming" the material (covering the content) rather than ensuring deep understanding (mastering the content). The dense and rigid curriculum structure also does not provide space for teachers to innovate, which requires more time.

Student Factors

Many students view the Hajj pilgrimage as something that is still very far beyond their reach, both financially and in terms of time. This perception reduces their intrinsic motivation to study it seriously (Abdullah, 2022; Ansori et al., 2019). This was conveyed by an informant

"I prefer to learn fiqh that can be practiced directly, such as proper prayer, or other materials. The Hajj is still a long way off, maybe 20 or 30 years from now. So I have little interest in learning about the Hajj."

The inability to see the relevance of the material to their daily lives becomes a significant psychological barrier. However, not all students share this view, as expressed by another student

"Because the material on Hajj and Umrah is important to learn so that when we have the opportunity to visit Mecca, we can apply the knowledge we have learned and not make mistakes."

Facilities and Institutional Policy Factors

Pesantren face financial constraints in procuring learning facilities and infrastructure. The procurement of facilities and infrastructure is often prioritized for the most urgent needs, such as classroom maintenance, electricity, and water. The development of specific learning media, such as a miniature Kaaba or Hajj simulation programs, is considered an "add-on" that can be postponed. This was conveyed by an informant:

"We do not yet have a miniature Kaaba facility due to budget constraints. There is no specific allocation for a miniature Kaaba as a medium for learning fiqh."

The Gap Between Cognitive Development Theory and Learning Practice

Piaget's theory places learners (aged 12-15 years) at the formal operational stage, where they should already be capable of abstract and deductive thinking

(Kusban et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2024). Research findings show a significant gap between theory and practice. Students still have difficulty understanding abstract concepts such as the differences between the pillars, obligations, and sunnah of Hajj, as well as the chronological sequence of complex rituals. This gap occurs because the transition to the formal operational stage is not an instantaneous and uniform process for all students. Students at this stage still need a “cognitive bridge” in the form of concrete experiences or clear visualizations to build mental schemas for abstract concepts. Learning that relies solely on lectures and texts fails to provide the necessary scaffolding. In the context of learning about Hajj and Umrah, the complexity of the material, which includes theological, ritual, geographical, and chronological dimensions, creates a very high cognitive load for learners who have just transitioned to the formal stage of thinking.

Statements about confusion in distinguishing between the pillars and obligations of Hajj indicate cognitive overload. According to Cognitive Load Theory, when information exceeds the working memory capacity of learners and is not supported by visual representations or concrete experiences, information processing fails. As a result, students are only able to remember information fragmentarily and are prone to forgetting. This theory distinguishes three types of cognitive load: intrinsic load (the inherent complexity of the material), extraneous load (the burden caused by poor presentation), and germane load (cognitive load that is productive for learning).

In the case of learning about the hajj and umrah in this Islamic boarding school, the intrinsic load is already very high due to the complexity of the material itself. However, the lecture method, which is not supported by visual media, adds unnecessary extraneous load, leaving almost no cognitive capacity for germane load, which is the cognitive process that actually builds deep understanding. Students not only have to remember Arabic terms (miqat, wukuf, mabit, tahallul, tawaf ifadah, sa'i, and so on), but also have to understand the legal classification of each action, the chronological order that cannot be reversed, and the legal consequences of each mistake, all without ever seeing or experiencing it directly. Furthermore, this gap between theory and practice can also be explained through the concept of the “zone of proximal development,” which describes the distance between the actual level of development, as demonstrated by the ability to solve problems independently, and the potential level of development, as demonstrated by the ability to solve problems under adult guidance or through collaboration with more capable peers. In learning at Al-Bi'tsatul Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School, teachers have not been optimal in providing adequate scaffolding to help students move through their Zone of Proximal Development.

The monological lecture method does not provide opportunities for dynamic interaction that would allow teachers to detect the specific difficulties of each student and tailor their learning support accordingly. The results of the study show that the family environment has a positive influence on student learning outcomes, contributing 35.4%. The remaining 64.6% is influenced by factors outside the family environment. The study emphasizes that learning that does not take into account the cognitive development stage of students will result in a gap between learning objectives and actual achievements. The unique contribution of this study is that it reveals that this gap is not only caused by a general mismatch in methods, but specifically by the absence of a cognitive bridge between concrete and abstract thinking in the context of highly complex material such as the hajj and umrah.

Dominance of Lecture Method

The dominance of the lecture method found in this study contradicts the principles of Experiential Learning, which emphasizes learning through four stages, namely Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization,

and Active Experimentation (Aziz, 2017). At Al-Bi'tsatul Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School, the learning cycle only focuses on Abstract Conceptualization without being preceded or followed by concrete experiences and active experimentation. This creates incomplete and meaningless learning. It is a classic dilemma in education: the trade-off between content coverage (completing the material) and content mastery (in-depth mastery). The time constraint of only two hours of lessons per week forces teachers to choose efficiency at the expense of effectiveness.

In learning theory, there is a concept known as “teaching to the test,” where teachers focus on delivering factual information that will be tested, without ensuring deep conceptual understanding. Lectures are indeed the most efficient method for conveying a lot of information in a short time. Conversely, learning through direct practice or simulation has a higher retention rate. Teacher-centered lectures also hinder social interaction, which is key in Vygotsky's Social Constructivism theory. The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development emphasizes the importance of scaffolding or teacher support to help students achieve a higher level of understanding. However, effective scaffolding requires dialogue, open-ended questions, and continuous formative assessment—elements that cannot be facilitated in a one-way lecture method. Furthermore, socio-constructivist learning also emphasizes the importance of peer collaboration, where learners learn through discussion and negotiation of meaning with their peers.

In the context of learning about Hajj and Umrah, group discussions about the differences between Hajj ifrad, qiran, and tamattu, or role-playing about problematic situations in performing Hajj, would be far more effective in building deep understanding than passively listening to the teacher's explanations. These findings contrast with previous studies that proved the effectiveness of alternative methods, showing that Problem-Based Learning can improve student understanding compared to conventional methods. In PBL, students are presented with authentic problems that they must solve through investigation, collaboration, and presentation of solutions. For Hajj and Umrah material, this can be implemented by providing real cases, for example

PBL effectively improves students' critical thinking skills in Fiqh learning. Critical thinking skills in analyzing, evaluating, and creating are the highest levels in Bloom's taxonomy. Hajj and Umrah learning that only focuses on memorization (remembering level) and understanding without advancing to the application, analysis, and evaluation levels will not result in meaningful and lasting learning. It has been proven that the advocacy method can improve learning outcomes from 13.64% to 100% in the third cycle. The advocacy method encourages students to take a position and defend their arguments based on Sharia principles, which is very suitable for fiqh learning, which is argumentative in nature.

The demonstration method increased learning motivation with teacher activity rising from 69% to 89%. The demonstration method, in which teachers or students directly demonstrate procedural steps, is very suitable for hajj and umrah material, which is procedural in nature. Students not only hear about tawaf, but see and then practice for themselves (albeit in simulation form) how tawaf is performed, starting from the Black Stone, seven counterclockwise circles, with the Kaaba on the left, and so on.

The fundamental difference between this study and previous studies is that this study not only identifies that the lecture method is ineffective, but also reveals the systemic root causes of why this method persists despite being proven ineffective. These factors include: a combination of structural time constraints (determined by the national curriculum), content-heavy curriculum demands (a lot of material to cover), teacher resistance to change rooted in comfort zones and a lack of training in innovative methods, and a lack of supporting infrastructure (media, practice rooms,

budget for simulations). Thus, the solution cannot be partial, such as only training teachers, but must be systemic, involving curriculum revision, teacher capacity building, and infrastructure provision.

Limitations of Media and Implications of Cognitive Load Theory

The limited availability of learning media is a major obstacle in creating concrete visualizations of the Hajj and Umrah rituals. The main media used are textbooks and static images drawn on the blackboard. The absence of more interactive and representative media, such as miniature models of the Kaaba or documentary videos, makes it difficult for students to imagine the entire worship process. Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory explains why media limitations are a serious problem. Hajj and Umrah material has a very high intrinsic load due to its multidimensional complexity: geographical (unfamiliar locations such as Mina, Muzdalifah, Arafah), procedural (strict ritual sequence), theological (spiritual meaning of each pillar), and legal (legal consequences of each action or omission). Presentation through lectures and texts alone forces students to imagine something they have never seen before.

Students' statements about forgetting the number of tawaf rotations and the direction of sa'i indicate that without clear visual support, students find it difficult to form accurate mental models. Mental models are internal representations that a person constructs about how a system or process works. Accurate mental models enable a person to understand, predict, and respond to situations appropriately. In the context of learning about the hajj, students need to build mental models of the geographical layout of Mecca and its surroundings, the chronological sequence of rituals from ihram to tahallul, and the relationships between ritual components (for example: why must wukuf be in Arafah, not elsewhere?). Without adequate visual media, the mental model that is formed will be vague, incomplete, and easily distorted.

Conversely, the use of visual media such as miniature Ka'bahs, 3D maps of Mecca, documentary videos of Hajj journeys, or even virtual reality tours can reduce extraneous load by providing clear external representations. Thus, cognitive resources can be focused on understanding the essence of the material (cognitive load) rather than being consumed by trying to imagine what the Kaaba looks like or where the hills of Shafa and Marwa are located. Dual Coding Theory also explains that information presented in both verbal and visual modalities will be processed through two different channels in the brain, thereby strengthening retention and understanding. Students who hear explanations about tawaf while watching videos or visual diagrams will have a stronger understanding than those who only hear or only see.

Research shows that miniature media for Hajj rituals is feasible and effective based on validation from learning media experts. Learners' learning outcomes improved significantly after using miniature media, and miniature media helped students understand material that was previously considered abstract. Furthermore, the study also showed that learners who used miniatures had better long-term retention; they were still able to explain the sequence of rituals correctly even after a month of not studying the material.

The unique contribution of this research is that it reveals that the absence of media is not merely a technical problem or pedagogical preference, but reflects a deeper structural problem: budget constraints that force Islamic boarding schools to prioritize basic needs (buildings, electricity, water) over learning innovations, and institutional priorities that do not consider investment in learning media as urgent. the absence of an integrated Hajj program in the pesantren system that could justify the procurement of facilities, and a lack of advocacy from teachers about the

importance of learning media, which may stem from the teachers' own lack of understanding of modern learning theory.

Furthermore, in today's digital age, there are actually many free or low-cost digital learning media available. Documentary videos about the Hajj are available on YouTube, mobile applications about Hajj and Umrah guides can be downloaded for free, and some platforms even provide 360-degree virtual tours of the Grand Mosque. However, the use of this technology is also hampered by limited access to stable internet in Islamic boarding schools, a lack of adequate equipment (projectors, computers, or tablets), and, crucially, a lack of digital literacy and willingness on the part of teachers to integrate technology into learning. This shows that the problem is not solely financial, but also cultural and related to human resource capacity.

Psychological Motivation Factors and Material Relevance

The low level of interest among students in learning about Hajj and Umrah can be analyzed using Self-Determination Theory, which states that intrinsic motivation is high when three basic psychological needs are met: competence (feeling capable of performing tasks), autonomy (feeling in control and having choices), and relatedness (feeling connected to others or to meaningful goals). Learning at Al-Bi'tsatul Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School fails to fulfill all three. First, students do not feel competent because they constantly experience confusion and difficulty understanding the material. Every time they try to remember the sequence of rituals or distinguish between categories of law, they experience cognitive failure. Second, students do not have autonomy because learning is entirely directed by the teacher. Third, they find it difficult to find a connection (relatedness) between the "distant" material of the hajj and their daily lives.

Expectancy-Value Theory provides a more specific analytical framework. This theory states that a person's motivation to engage in a task is determined by two factors, expectancy of success and perceived value. When students feel unable to understand the material and do not see a realistic possibility of performing the hajj in the near future, their motivation to learn decreases dramatically. This was conveyed by an informant

"The hajj is still a long way off, maybe 20 or 30 years from now. So I have little interest in learning about the hajj material," reflecting the concept of temporal distance in Construal Level Theory.

This theory explains that events perceived as far in the future will be represented abstractly and less concretely in the mind, thus having a weaker influence on current behavior. For students from lower-middle-class families, the Hajj is not only distant temporally, but also psychologically distant due to enormous financial barriers. The socioeconomic context plays a very important role. The cost of a regular Hajj in 2025 will reach more than 60 million rupiah per person, an amount that is almost impossible for most families in Mandailing Natal, the majority of whom are farmers or small traders with modest incomes. This figure creates a psychological distance that makes it difficult for students to connect emotionally with the material. However, the research findings also show heterogeneity in the students' motivation. This was conveyed by an informant as follows

"Because the material on Hajj and Umrah is important to learn so that when there is an opportunity to visit Mecca, we can apply the knowledge we have learned and not make mistakes." This statement reflects intrinsic motivation rooted in religious values and a positive future orientation. These differences in motivation can be explained by differences in family values (how important the family considers religious education and worship), personal aspirations (how strong the personal desire is to be a good Muslim), and self-efficacy (the belief that with effort, they will be able to perform the hajj someday).

The pedagogical implication is that teachers need to use strategies that can increase the relevance of the material and bridge psychological distance. Some

strategies that can be applied include contextualizing the material with everyday life, for example, by explaining that the principles of the hajj (patience, discipline, social awareness) are also relevant in everyday life. the use of role models, by inviting speakers from the local community who have performed the Hajj to share their experiences, so that the Hajj no longer feels like something impossible; goal-setting strategies, by helping students make long-term plans to save early for the Hajj; and an emphasis on the value of worship, not just the procedural aspects, by explaining the spiritual meaning and character values contained in each Hajj ritual.

The Paradox of Islamic Boarding School Tradition and Learning Modernization

An interesting and paradoxical finding in this study is the tension between the strong pesantren tradition in religious education and limitations in pedagogical innovation. Al-Bi'tsatul Islamiyah pesantren, like other pesantren in Indonesia, has a long and respected tradition of Islamic scholarship. However, this study found that experience is not directly proportional to pedagogical innovation. Instead, there is methodological stagnation, where teachers remain comfortable with the lecture methods they have been using for years. There is a complex structural tension between the demands of the national curriculum, which calls for student-centered and competency-based learning, the reality of implementation, which is still teacher-centered and content-based, the idealism of conducting manasik simulations or more innovative methods, and the lack of supporting programs and infrastructure that make this idealism difficult to realize (Faddhia et al., 2025; Ikhlas et al., 2025).

This paradox can be explained through the concept of “institutional isomorphism” in organizational theory. This theory explains that organizations tend to adopt structures and practices similar to other organizations in the same field, not because these practices are the most effective, but because of institutional pressure. There are three types of isomorphism: coercive (due to external pressure or regulation), mimetic (imitating other organizations that are considered successful), and normative (due to professionalization and norms within the profession). In the context of Islamic boarding schools, all three types of isomorphism occur: pressure from the national curriculum that must be followed (coercive), the tendency to follow learning patterns that are common in other Islamic boarding schools (mimetic), and norms among fiqh teachers that emphasize the importance of talaqqi (direct transmission of knowledge from teacher to student) associated with the lecture method (normative).

In addition to spiritual and cultural factors, resistance to change is also rooted in psychological and professional factors: the comfort zone of familiar methods—trying new methods requires energy, preparation time, and the risk of failure that not all teachers are prepared to face. Lack of self-efficacy in using new methods—teachers may not be confident that they are capable of implementing more complex methods such as PBL or simulation. Limited access to professional development training for Islamic boarding schools in the region. It is important to note that this resistance is not solely the “fault” of individual teachers. From an ecological learning perspective, teachers are part of a larger system, and their behavior is influenced by the conditions of that system. If the system does not provide support (training, time, budget, appreciation), it is unrealistic to expect teachers to innovate independently and sustainably.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study makes several important contributions. First, it reinforces the argument that Piaget's theory of cognitive development needs to be combined with Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding in the learning of complex abstract concepts. Piaget's theory provides an understanding of the cognitive capacities of learners at certain stages of development, while Vygotsky's theory provides guidance

on how to help learners exceed their actual capacities to reach their maximum potential through appropriate support. The integration of these two theories is highly relevant to the learning of fiqh, which involves abstract concepts that must be operationalized in concrete practice (Engkizar et al., 2021; Saputra et al., 2023).

Second, this study validates Cognitive Load Theory in the context of Islamic religious learning, particularly procedural and complex material such as hajj and umrah. The finding that learners experience cognitive overload when they have to process complex information without adequate visual media support reinforces Sweller's argument about the importance of managing cognitive load in learning design. The specific contribution of this study is to show how the unique characteristics of religious material—which involves theological, ritual, geographical, and legal dimensions simultaneously—create a very high intrinsic load, thus requiring specific strategies to minimize extraneous load and maximize germane load.

Third, this study shows the importance of integrating motivation theory, particularly Self-Determination Theory and Expectancy-Value Theory, in designing meaningful learning. Fiqh learning cannot only focus on cognitive and procedural aspects, but must also pay attention to affective and motivational dimensions. The findings on how psychological distance affects learning motivation provide new insights into why certain materials in the Islamic curriculum are more difficult to teach effectively, not solely because of the complexity of the material, but because of its perceived low relevance to students.

Fourth, this study contributes to the understanding of institutional constraints in learning innovation. Findings on the paradox between strong pesantren traditions and pedagogical stagnation show that changes in learning cannot be understood solely from a technical pedagogical perspective, but must also consider institutional, cultural, and socio-economic dimensions. This enriches the ecological perspective in educational research, which emphasizes that learning occurs in the context of complex and interrelated systems.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of data and discussion described above, this study concludes that teaching fiqh material on Hajj and Umrah at Al-Bi'tsatul Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School faces multidimensional challenges. The main problems lie in three aspects, namely, first, the procedural cognitive difficulties of students in understanding abstract and complex material. Second, the monotony of learning methods dominated by a teacher-centered approach. Third, the limitations of learning media that hinder the process of visualization and internalization of material. These factors are interrelated in a complex cause-and-effect relationship. The complex nature of Hajj and Umrah material is compounded by limitations in developing learning strategies. The curriculum structure with limited time allocation does not support the application of more participatory methods. Meanwhile, the low intrinsic motivation of students and the lack of infrastructure support create a continuous problematic cycle. Based on the findings and theoretical analysis, several comprehensive and applicable practical recommendations can be formulated. For teachers, the main recommendation is to diversify learning methods by integrating participatory approaches such as role-playing with fiqh problem scenarios, manasik simulations using simple resources, and problem-based learning to train analysis. Meanwhile, for Islamic boarding schools, the recommendations focus on systemic support. Islamic boarding schools need to allocate budgets gradually and strategically for the procurement of learning media, such as miniature Ka'bah.

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