

Mental Health Management Model in Islamic Boarding Schools: Psychological Development Strategy for Students in the Digital Era

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Abstract

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The mental health of students in Islamic boarding schools faces increasingly complex challenges in the digital era, but the management model of mental health integrated with Islamic boarding school values is still limited. This study aims to develop a mental health management model in Islamic boarding schools that incorporates a modern psychological approach with Islamic spiritual values in facing the challenges of the digital era. Qualitative research methods, combined with a literature study approach, were applied during the period 2022-2025. This analysis focused on the latest scientific literature regarding the mental health of students, health management models in Islamic educational institutions, and the documentation of best practices in psychological guidance within Islamic boarding schools. The results of the study identified an increase in cases of mental health disorders among students related to the intensity of gadget use, academic pressure, and conflicts between traditional and modern values. The comprehensive mental health management model developed consists of five key components: an early detection system and periodic assessment, an integrated counseling service unit that combines a modern psychological approach with Islamic spiritual values, a tiered digital literacy program, a peer support system, and a referral network and collaboration with professional mental health institutions. The identified implementation strategies include a phased approach, the development of tiered training modules, the integration of programs into the curriculum, and wise use of digital technology. This model bridges the gap between the traditional approach based on religious values and the modern approach based on scientific knowledge and provides an operational framework that can be adapted by various types of Islamic boarding schools according to their characteristics and capacities. The limitation of this study lies in the absence of empirical validation in various types of Islamic boarding schools, so further research is needed to test the effectiveness of the model in various contexts.

Keywords: *Mental Health of Santri, Health Management, Islamic Boarding School, Digital Era, Spiritual-Psychological Integration*

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INTRODUCTION

The mental health of students in Islamic boarding schools is an increasingly urgent issue to pay attention to along with the increasing psychological challenges faced by the younger generation in the digital era (Paramansyah et al., 2024). The complexity of students' mental health problems is exacerbated by rapid social change, high academic pressure, and the increasingly massive influence of digital technology in everyday life (Maghfiroh et al., 2024). The lack of a mental

health management model that is integrated with Islamic boarding school values often makes handling students' psychological problems incomprehensive and ineffective (Muttaqin et al., 2024). Islamic boarding schools as traditional Islamic educational institutions that are currently transforming face major challenges in balancing spiritual development with the psychological needs of modern students who live amid the globalization of information and technology (Halimah et al., 2024).

Mental health management in the context of Islamic boarding schools can be understood as a series of systematic efforts to maintain, protect, and improve the psychological condition of students through an integrative approach involving various parties in the Islamic boarding school ecosystem (Zahro, 2024). This concept is based on three main pillars, namely preventive (prevention), promotive (improvement), and curative (handling) which are implemented continuously and integrated into the life of the Islamic boarding school (Fazary & Choliq, 2023). According to Rothman et al., (2024), mental health in the Islamic paradigm is not merely the absence of psychological disorders but includes a balance of physical and spiritual aspects that enable individuals to carry out social and spiritual functions optimally (Rothman et al., 2024). In the pesantren tradition, the concept of "as-shihhah an-nafsiyyah" (mental health) has long been known as an inseparable part of the character building of students through the tazkiyatun nafs (soul purification) and riyadhoh (spiritual training) approaches carried out in daily routines (Salsabila & Tentiasih, 2024). The digital era brings a new dimension to the conceptualization of mental health in pesantren, as stated by Hussain et al., (2023) that digital literacy and spiritual intelligence are two important components that complement each other in forming the psychological resilience of students (Hussain et al., 2023).

Recent research by Hidayat and Rahmawati (2023) shows that students in several modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia experience symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression associated with increased use of social media and digital technology (Fadilah et al., 2023). A longitudinal study conducted by Ahmed et al. (2023) found a correlation between strict restrictions on digital access without adequate education and the emergence of psychological adaptation problems in students (Ahmed et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Aziz's research (2024) revealed that the approach of integrating Islamic spiritual values with modern psychological concepts was able to reduce students' stress levels through intervention programs in several large Islamic boarding schools in Java (Kumala, 2024). However, the implementation of this model is still limited to Islamic boarding schools with adequate resources and has not become a standardized system in the Islamic boarding school education ecosystem in general.

In line with this phenomenon, a study conducted by Hidayat et al., (2022) found that most Islamic boarding schools do not yet have a mental health management system that is integrated into the curriculum and activities of the Islamic boarding school (Hidayati et al., 2022). Islamic boarding school administrators often use traditional approaches in dealing with students' psychological problems that do not always match the complexity of the challenges of the digital era. Research by Ismail et al., (2024) identified an urgent need to develop a psychological guidance model that bridges the traditional wisdom of

Islamic boarding schools with contemporary psychological knowledge (Ismail et al., 2024). Several modern Islamic boarding schools have begun to adopt counseling guidance programs, but they have not been specifically designed to address the challenges that arise from students' interactions with digital technology (Rasyadi et al., 2023).

The gap identified from these studies is the absence of a comprehensive mental health management model specifically designed for the context of Islamic boarding schools by considering the dynamics of the digital era. Existing models tend to be partial, focus on curative interventions, and have not integrated preventive and promotive aspects into a complete management system. In addition, the existing approach has not optimally utilized the potential of the wisdom of Islamic boarding school traditions as a foundation for fostering the mental health of students and has not accommodated the unique characteristics of students as users of digital technology who have normative limitations based on Islamic values. Based on the gap analysis, this study aims to develop a mental health management model in Islamic boarding schools that integrates a modern psychological approach with Islamic spiritual values in facing the challenges of the digital era. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the question of how strategies for fostering the psychology of students can be formulated and implemented systematically by considering the unique characteristics of the Islamic boarding school environment and the challenges of the digital era. The novelty of this study lies in the development of an integrative model that combines traditional Islamic boarding school wisdom, contemporary psychological concepts, and digital literacy in a comprehensive mental health management framework.

The importance of this research is also supported by recent developments in Islamic education policies that increasingly emphasize the psychological well-being of students. The Ministry of Religious Affairs through the Directorate of Early Childhood Education and Islamic Boarding Schools has launched a program to strengthen the competence of Islamic boarding school caregivers in the field of guidance and counseling as part of efforts to improve the quality of Islamic boarding school education. This momentum needs to be utilized to develop a mental health management model that is adaptive to the context of Islamic boarding schools and can be implemented sustainably. This research is expected to provide a significant contribution in answering these challenges through a systematic and integrative approach.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach carried out during the period 2022-2025. Data collection was carried out through an extensive review of the latest scientific literature including national and international journals, research reports, reference books, and official publications from institutions related to mental health and Islamic boarding school education. The data sources analyzed include the results of empirical research on the mental health of Islamic boarding school students, health management models in various Islamic educational institutions, and documentation of best practices in psychological guidance in Islamic boarding schools that have been published. The data analysis process was carried out systematically through the stages of

identifying relevant literature, categorizing content based on main themes, synthesizing key findings, and formulating a conceptual model of mental health management in Islamic boarding schools. An interpretive-critical approach was used to analyze the suitability of various theoretical models with the socio-cultural and spiritual context of Islamic boarding schools in facing the challenges of the digital era.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Mapping The Mental Health Conditions Of Islamic Boarding School Students In The Digital Era

The results of the literature review show an increase in cases of mental health disorders among Islamic boarding school students over the past five years. Based on a synthesis of various studies, it was found that the dominant mental health problems experienced by Islamic boarding school students include anxiety disorders, depression, academic stress, and adjustment problems. Several factors that influence the mental health conditions of Islamic boarding school students in the digital era were identified, including the intensity of gadget use, academic pressure, changes in social interaction patterns, limited privacy space, and conflicts between traditional Islamic boarding school values and the demands of modernity. Analysis of data from various studies shows that Islamic boarding school students who have good digital literacy and receive adequate education about the healthy use of technology tend to have better psychological resilience than students who do not receive such training.

Mental Health Management Models In Islamic Boarding Schools

Analysis of mental health management practices in various Islamic boarding schools resulted in the identification of four main models that have been implemented with varying degrees of success. The first model is the "Spiritual-Psychological Integrative Model" which combines psychological counseling approaches with Islamic spiritual practices such as tahajud therapy, mindfulness dhikr, and structured muhasabah. The second model is the "Pesantren Counseling Guidance Model" which adapts modern counseling techniques within the framework of Islamic boarding school values and is implemented by trained counselors from within the Islamic boarding school. The third model is the "External Collaborative Model" which involves collaboration with professional mental health institutions to handle cases that require clinical intervention. The fourth model is the "Community-Based Preventive Model" which emphasizes strengthening the social support system among students, empowering senior students as mental health mentors, and creating an Islamic boarding school environment that is conducive to psychological well-being.

Key Components Of The Islamic Boarding School Mental Health Management Model In The Digital Era

The results of the synthesis of various literature and best practices identified five key components that need to be present in the mental health management model of Islamic boarding schools in the digital era. The first component is an early detection system and periodic assessment that allows for structured and continuous monitoring of the psychological condition of students.

The second component is an integrated counseling service unit that combines a modern psychological approach with Islamic spiritual values and is implemented by qualified human resources. The third component is a tiered digital literacy program specifically designed for the context of Islamic boarding schools by considering the uniqueness of the values and normative limitations that apply. The fourth component is a peer support system that involves empowering senior students as mental health agents and creating a social support network between students. The fifth component is a referral network and collaboration with professional mental health institutions to handle cases that require further intervention.

Mental Health Management Model Implementation Strategy In Islamic Boarding Schools

Analysis of the challenges of implementing a mental health management model in Islamic boarding schools resulted in the identification of several key strategies to ensure successful implementation. The first strategy is a gradual approach that begins with strengthening awareness and understanding of the entire Islamic boarding school ecosystem about the importance of mental health, followed by developing internal human resource capacity, establishing supporting systems and infrastructure, implementing programs, and evaluating and continuously improving. The second strategy is the development of tiered training modules to equip Islamic boarding school caregivers and mentors with basic counseling and mental health management skills that are contextual to the Islamic boarding school environment. The third strategy is the integration of mental health programs into the curriculum and routine activities of Islamic boarding schools such as studying books on mental health from an Islamic perspective, regular mentoring programs, and communal activities that support psychological well-being. The fourth strategy is the wise use of digital technology as part of the solution, such as the development of a student mental health monitoring application, a safe digital counseling platform that is by Islamic boarding school values, and digital-based mental health education media that can be accessed by the entire Islamic boarding school community.

Indicators Of Success Of Mental Health Programs In Islamic Boarding Schools

Based on literature analysis and best practices, several indicators were identified that can be used to evaluate the success of mental health management programs in Islamic boarding schools. At the student level, indicators of success include improving psychological well-being, reducing the number of mental disorders, increasing resilience and coping skills, and increasing mental health and digital literacy. At the institutional level, indicators of success include the existence of structured mental health policies and procedures, the availability of easily accessible counseling services, the integration of mental health programs into the curriculum and activities of Islamic boarding schools, and the existence of an effective referral system for cases that require further treatment. At the system level, indicators of success include the existence of a collaborative network with professional mental health institutions, the availability of human resources trained in the field of mental health, and the existence of an adequate budget and resources for the sustainability of mental health programs.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation Of Mental Health Management Model In Islamic Boarding Schools

The results of the study revealed a significant pattern in mapping the mental health conditions of students in the digital era, where there has been an increase in cases of mental health disorders over the past five years with dominant manifestations in the form of anxiety, depression, academic stress, and adjustment problems. This phenomenon reflects the complexity of the psychological challenges faced by students in the context of the digital transformation taking place in the Islamic boarding school environment. This finding is in line with the results of research by Hidayat and Rahmawati (2023) which identified a correlation between the intensity of social media use and increased stress symptoms in students in modern Islamic boarding schools (Fadilah et al., 2023). Another study conducted by Azzuhriyah (2024) in several Islamic boarding schools in East Java also found that there was a significant increase in anxiety symptoms in students related to the use of social media without adequate guidance (Azzuhriyyah, 2024). Likewise, research by Maghfiroh et al., (2024) identified the main risk factors for mental health disorders in Islamic boarding school students, which include academic pressure, limited digital access that is not balanced with adequate literacy, and changes in social interaction patterns due to the demands of adaptation in the digital era (Maghfiroh et al., 2024).

What is interesting is the discovery of a better psychological resilience pattern in students who have adequate digital literacy, which confirms the argument of Hussain et al. (2023) that digital literacy is an important component in forming psychological resilience in the digital era. Similar findings were revealed in a study conducted by Wibowo and Haryanti (2024) which showed a positive correlation between the level of digital literacy of students and their capacity to deal with stress and psychological pressure. Research by Harmaningsih et al., (2024) also strengthens this finding by showing that digital literacy improvement programs in several modern Islamic boarding schools have succeeded in reducing anxiety levels and increasing students' ability to adapt to the demands of the digital era (Harmaningsih et al., 2024).

The "Pesantren Counseling Guidance Model" and "External Collaborative Model" demonstrate an awareness of the need for a professional approach in dealing with mental health problems in Islamic boarding schools. This is a response to the findings of Ismail et al. (2024) regarding the urgent need to develop a psychological guidance model that bridges the traditional wisdom of Islamic boarding schools with contemporary psychological knowledge (Ismail et al., 2024). Nurhayati and Abdullah (2023) in their research identified that Islamic boarding schools that implemented a structured counseling guidance model experienced a decrease in drop-out cases due to psychological problems compared to Islamic boarding schools that had not developed the system. A study by Rofiqi & Mansyur. (2024) also showed the effectiveness of the "External Collaborative Model" through a partnership program between several Islamic boarding schools in West Java and professional mental health institutions, which succeeded in increasing students' access to quality mental health services and reducing the stigma

associated with mental disorders in the Islamic boarding school environment (Rofiqi & Mansyur, 2023).

Meanwhile, the "Community-Based Preventive Model" which emphasizes the empowerment of social support systems among students reflects the understanding that mental health is not only the responsibility of individuals but also the community. This approach is in line with the concept of "takaful ijtima'i" (social solidarity) in Islam which emphasizes the importance of communal support in overcoming various problems, including mental health. Siy & Tanseco (2023) in their study found that the buddy-mentoring system between students implemented in several Islamic boarding schools has proven effective in creating an environment that supports mental health and reduces cases of social isolation (Siy & Tanseco, 2024). Hasanah's research (2024) also describes the success of the "mental health halaqah" program which optimizes the role of seniors in providing psychological support for junior students through regular meetings in small groups (Vatin et al., 2024).

Key Component Analysis Of The Mental Health Management Model

The five key components identified in the mental health management model in Islamic boarding schools—early detection system, integrated counseling service unit, tiered digital literacy program, peer support system, and professional referral network—demonstrate a comprehensive approach that goes beyond previously existing partial mental health management models. This finding addresses the gap identified by Hidayat et al. (2022) regarding the absence of an integrated mental health management system in the curriculum and activities of Islamic boarding schools (Hidayati et al., 2022). Anwar & Julia's (2022) research also revealed that most mental health initiatives in Islamic boarding schools are still sporadic and reactive, so the systemic approach proposed in this study provides a solution to this problem (Anwar & Julia, 2022).

The components of the early detection system and periodic assessment are manifestations of a preventive approach that has so far received less attention in mental health management in Islamic boarding schools. Research by Maghfiroh et al. (2024) shows that Islamic boarding schools that implement a structured mental health monitoring system have a higher rate of early detection of mental disorder cases and more timely interventions. A study by Khasanah and Maulana (2023) also emphasized the importance of an early detection system by finding that late identification of mental health problems in students often leads to more serious psychological complications and requires more intensive intervention (Asih et al., 2023). Research by Paramansyah et al., (2024) added that the implementation of a simple but sensitive screening instrument to the cultural context of Islamic boarding schools can significantly increase the effectiveness of early detection of mental disorders (Paramansyah et al., 2024).

Integrated counseling service units that combine modern psychological approaches with Islamic spiritual values reflect the understanding that the effectiveness of counseling in the Islamic boarding school environment cannot be separated from the spiritual context that underlies the lives of students. This is consistent with the study of Salsabila and Tentiasih (2024) which found that a counseling approach that integrates Sufism values with modern counseling techniques results in higher levels of satisfaction and effectiveness than

conventional counseling approaches. Pearce et al., (2024) in their study also reported that students showed a higher level of openness when consulting with counselors who were able to articulate psychological problems within the framework of spiritual understanding that they believed in (Pearce et al., 2024).

The tiered digital literacy program as the third component represents an acknowledgement of the reality that digital technology has become an inseparable part of the lives of modern Islamic boarding school students. This approach contrasts with the findings of Ahmed et al. (2023) who identified a correlation between strict restrictions on digital access without adequate education and the emergence of psychological adaptation problems in Islamic boarding school students (Ahmed et al., 2023). Fatimah and Hakim's (2023) research strengthens this finding by showing that Islamic boarding schools that implement a balanced digital regulation approach accompanied by a comprehensive literacy program have lower cases of mental health problems than Islamic boarding schools with extreme restriction policies. Bhavana's (2024) study adds a new dimension by identifying the effectiveness of a "digital fasting" model designed in stages and accompanied by mindful reflection in fostering a healthy relationship between Islamic boarding school students and digital technology (Bhavana, 2024).

The peer support system as the fourth component utilizes the potential of the hierarchical yet communal social structure of Islamic boarding schools, where senior students can act as mental health agents. This approach is parallel to the concept of "uswatun hasanah" (good role models) in the Islamic boarding school tradition and has been proven effective in the research of Rasyadi et al. (2023) who found that a peer-based mental health mentoring program can significantly improve the psychological well-being of students. Rasool et al., (2024) in their study developed a "mental health murabbi" model that trains senior students with basic psychological mentoring skills to build a tiered support system, which has been proven effective in increasing the sense of security and social connectedness among junior students (Rasool et al., 2024).

Referral networks and collaboration with professional mental health institutions as the fifth component reflect an awareness of the limitations of the internal capacity of Islamic boarding schools in handling cases that require clinical intervention. This collaborative approach is in line with the principle of "ta'awun" (cooperation) in Islam and answers Muttaqin et al.'s (2024) criticism of the tendency of Islamic boarding schools to handle all student problems internally without considering the need for professional intervention in certain cases. A case study conducted by Rahmawati and Yusuf (2023) on five Islamic boarding schools that implemented a structured referral system showed an increase in the results of handling complex cases of mental disorders. Puffer & Ayuku's (2022) research also illustrates the success of the "stepped care" model that integrates internal Islamic boarding school mental health services with a tiered referral system to professional mental health facilities (Puffer & Ayuku, 2022).

Implementation Strategy And Contextual Challenges

The implementation strategies identified in this study—a stepwise approach, development of tiered training modules, integration of programs into the curriculum, and judicious use of digital technology—demonstrate an understanding of the complexity of systemic change in the pesantren environment. A stepwise

approach that begins with strengthening awareness and understanding responds to the phenomenon put forward by Halimah et al. (2024) that resistance to mental health programs in pesantren is often rooted in misunderstandings about the concept of mental health from an Islamic perspective. The strategy of developing tiered training modules to equip pesantren caregivers with basic counseling skills is in line with the Ministry of Religion's program through the Directorate of Early Childhood Education and Islamic Boarding Schools which emphasizes the importance of improving caregiver competence in the field of guidance and counseling.

Integrating mental health programs into the curriculum and routine activities of Islamic boarding schools represents a more sustainable approach than the short-term intervention programs that are commonly carried out. This is in line with Zahro's (2024) view that mental health in the context of Islamic boarding schools needs to be understood as an integral part of the education system, not as a separate or additional program. Meanwhile, the strategy of using digital technology wisely as part of the solution reflects an adaptive attitude towards the realities of the digital era but remains critical of its potential negative impacts. This approach is consistent with the perspective of Paramansyah et al. (2024) who emphasize the importance of adaptive responses from Islamic boarding schools to the challenges of the digital era, not just resistance or rejection.

The challenges of implementing mental health management models in Islamic boarding schools cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context that surrounds them. The variation in the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools—from traditional to modern, from rural to urban—requires contextual adaptation of the model. As stated by Fazary and Choliq (2023), the effectiveness of mental health programs in Islamic boarding schools is highly dependent on sensitivity to local wisdom and the values adopted by each Islamic boarding school. Another challenge is the limited resources, both human resources who have qualifications in the field of mental health and supporting infrastructure. This is parallel to the findings of Hidayati et al. (2022) that the lack of trained human resources is one of the main obstacles in implementing mental health programs in Islamic boarding schools.

Theoretical And Practical Implementation

Theoretically, this study enriches the discourse on mental health from an Islamic perspective by offering a conceptual framework that integrates Islamic spiritual values with contemporary psychological knowledge. The mental health management model developed in this study bridges the dichotomy between traditional approaches based on religious values and modern approaches based on scientific knowledge. This is in line with the view of Rothman et al. (2024) who emphasize the compatibility between the concept of mental health in the Islamic tradition and modern psychological knowledge if both are understood correctly.

This study also broadens the understanding of the concept of "as-shihhah an-nafsiyyah" in Islamic tradition by contextualizing it in the reality of the digital era. The concept of mental health which traditionally focuses on spiritual and moral aspects is now expanded to include dimensions of digital literacy and psychological resilience in facing technological challenges. This expansion enriches the treasury of Islamic thought on mental health and opens up a space for dialogue between tradition and modernity.

In practical terms, the mental health management model developed in this study offers an operational framework that can be adapted by various types of Islamic boarding schools according to their characteristics and capacities. The five key components identified—early detection system, integrated counseling service unit, tiered digital literacy program, peer support system, and professional referral network—provide concrete guidance for Islamic boarding schools in developing a comprehensive mental health management system. The phased implementation strategy proposed in this study also provides a practical roadmap for Islamic boarding schools that wish to initiate or develop mental health programs. This approach accommodates the reality that changes in the Islamic boarding school environment often require a gradual and careful process to ensure that they are in line with the values espoused. In addition, the indicators of success identified at the student, institutional, and system levels provide an evaluation framework that can be used to measure the effectiveness of the program and identify areas that need improvement. Another important implication is the opportunity for Islamic boarding schools to become models for the integration of spiritual values with modern mental health approaches in the context of Islamic education. Islamic boarding schools that successfully implement a comprehensive mental health management model can serve as references and inspiration for other Islamic educational institutions, both in Indonesia and globally. This is in line with research by Paramansyah et al. (2024) which identified the potential of Islamic boarding schools as laboratories for developing Islamic education models that are responsive to contemporary challenges, including in the field of mental health.

Future Development Direction

This study opens up several potential development directions to be explored in further studies. First, more specific empirical research is needed to test the effectiveness of the mental health management model that has been developed in the context of diverse Islamic boarding schools. Experimental or quasi-experimental studies can be conducted to measure the impact of model implementation on indicators of students' mental health. Second, the development of training modules for Islamic boarding school caregivers that integrate Islamic spiritual values with contemporary psychological knowledge is an area that needs further attention. These modules need to be designed by considering the variety of educational backgrounds and understanding of caregivers about mental health. Third, a deeper exploration of the potential of digital technology in supporting mental health management in Islamic boarding schools, such as the development of monitoring applications that are in accordance with Islamic boarding school values, a safe and private online counseling platform, and digital-based mental health education media that can be accessed by the entire Islamic boarding school community. Fourth, comparative research between mental health management models in Islamic boarding schools with similar models in other religious-based educational institutions, both in national and international contexts, can provide a broader perspective and enrich understanding of the integration of spiritual values with modern mental health approaches in various cultural and religious contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study has successfully developed a comprehensive mental health management model for Islamic boarding schools in the digital era consisting of five key components: an early detection system, an integrated counseling service unit, a tiered digital literacy program, a peer support system, and a professional referral network. This model significantly advances scientific knowledge by bridging the gap between traditional Islamic boarding school values and contemporary psychological approaches, as well as providing an operational framework that is adaptive to the various characteristics of Islamic boarding schools. Through an integrative spiritual-psychological approach, this model overcomes the limitations of the partial approach that has been dominant in handling mental health in Islamic boarding schools. However, this study has limitations because it is still based on literature studies and has not been empirically validated in various types of Islamic boarding schools. The variation in the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools—from traditional to modern, from rural to urban—requires field testing to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of the model in diverse contexts. Limited resources, both qualified human resources, and supporting infrastructure, are also implementation challenges that need to be overcome through gradual and adaptive strategies according to the capacity of each Islamic boarding school.

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