



The Efficacy of the Al-Miftah Method in Improving Yellow Book Reading Ability for Students with Learning Disabilities

Abdul Aziz Al-Wahedi, Muhammad Durrin Ni'am*, Ahmad Rausyan Fikri, Hasan Baharun, Hefniy

¹Universitas Nurul Jadid, Indonesia

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Al-Miftah Method in improving the yellow-book reading and comprehension abilities of students with learning difficulties. A quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest approach was employed. Twelve students were divided into an experimental group receiving the Al-Miftah Method and a control group receiving conventional instruction. Data were collected through pretest and posttest assessments, N-Gain analysis, and participatory observations of student engagement during learning activities. The findings showed greater improvement in the experimental group than in the control group. The mean posttest score increased from 33.00 to 81.33 in the experimental group, compared with an increase from 32.17 to 65.33 in the control group. The experimental group obtained a mean N-Gain score of 0.736, categorized as high, whereas the control group obtained 0.494, categorized as medium. Observational findings also indicated increased participation, confidence, and willingness to ask questions among students receiving the Al-Miftah Method. The findings suggest that Al-Miftah has potential as a structured instructional approach for supporting inclusive yellow-book learning and accommodating students with diverse learning needs in Islamic boarding school education.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) serve a function by combining religious learning, character formation, and community development. Their educational quality matters not only for students but also for the continuity of Islamic scholarship and social values within Indonesian communities. Learning the yellow book is important because it provides access to classical Islamic knowledge and remains an important component of pesantren learning traditions (Arif et al., 2023; Ardiansyah & Tanjung, 2026). When students participate successfully in this learning, pesantren can provide equitable opportunities to develop religious literacy. Recent studies show increasing attention to inclusive educational practices in pesantren, including support for students with diverse abilities and learning needs (Abdurrahman et al., 2026; Fahriany & Wahyunengsih, 2025). Thus,

*Email Correspondence: muhammaddurrinniam@gmail.com

improving access to yellow-book learning is an educational concern. Developing instructional approaches that accommodate learner diversity can strengthen pesantren education while advancing inclusive religious learning.

The importance of this issue becomes greater as educational institutions are expected to ensure that differences in students' abilities do not become barriers to meaningful participation. Pesantren increasingly face the need to balance traditional instructional practices with approaches responsive to contemporary educational diversity. Research on child-friendly and inclusive pesantren emphasizes educational systems that recognize students' needs, dignity, independence, and participation (Azizah et al., 2025; Hasibuan, 2026; Baharun & Jannah, 2025). At the same time, research on learning management in pesantren highlights systematic organization of learning processes while preserving institutional traditions (Yamin et al., 2023; Hasan & Sugiono, 2022). These developments indicate that inclusion should extend beyond institutional access to the classroom level. Therefore, identifying culturally appropriate instructional strategies for students who experience learning difficulties is socially important because it can help pesantren provide equitable religious education without abandoning their distinctive educational traditions.

A major problem arises when students with learning difficulties encounter Arabic texts whose vocabulary, grammatical structures, and contextual meanings are unfamiliar. Yellow-book learning requires students to integrate several linguistic skills simultaneously, which may create barriers for learners who need gradual, repetitive, or structured instruction. Previous studies have identified the importance of systematic methods for developing yellow-book reading competence, particularly through approaches such as Al-Miftah (Fathoni & A'dlom, 2024; Hidayah et al., 2024; Wahyuni & Handriani, 2025). However, an established method does not automatically ensure that its implementation responds to students with different conditions. In inclusive pesantren contexts, educational support must consider individual participation and learning needs rather than applying identical expectations to all students (Abdurrahman et al., 2026; Azizah et al., 2025). Consequently, the problem is how pesantren can adapt an existing yellow-book learning method so students with learning difficulties can participate meaningfully and develop literacy.

This problem is relevant at Nurul Qur'an Kraksaan Islamic Boarding School in Probolinggo, East Java, where yellow-book learning is conducted among students with diverse learning conditions. Students who experience difficulties in processing Arabic vocabulary, sentence structures, and textual meanings may require additional instructional support to participate effectively in classroom activities. The practical situation makes appropriate learning methods important for academic achievement, confidence, engagement, and meaningful participation in learning and religious study. Recent studies show that supportive environments, peer assistance, and inclusive management can promote self-efficacy and independence among students in pesantren settings (Azizah et al., 2025; Izzah et al., 2025). Meanwhile, research on Al-Miftah indicates that structured learning can facilitate yellow-book literacy through systematic instructional stages (Syarifuddin

& Sukari, 2025; Maftuhah et al., 2026). Examining this setting can therefore provide evidence for improving access to religious learning for students with learning difficulties.

Previous research has established the usefulness of Al-Miftah for developing yellow-book reading competence. Studies have examined its implementation, curriculum, instructional procedures, and contribution to students' reading abilities, generally reporting positive outcomes (Nizar et al., 2025; Mundiri et al., 2022). Other studies have investigated Al-Miftah as a structured approach for improving students' literacy in classical Islamic texts (Aziz et al., 2025; Septiana, 2025). Parallel research has addressed inclusion in pesantren through peer support, child-friendly management, tolerance, and educational access for students with diverse needs (Azizah et al., 2025; Paglialunga & Melogno, 2025). Together, these studies establish two research streams: instructional innovation in yellow-book education and inclusive pesantren development. However, these streams have rarely been examined together, particularly in relation to students with learning difficulties. This separation limits understanding of how established pesantren learning methods can support differentiated educational needs.

The research gap is located at the intersection of Al-Miftah instruction, yellow-book literacy, and inclusive education for students with learning difficulties. Existing Al-Miftah studies have primarily examined general santri populations and improvements in reading competence, while inclusive pesantren studies have tended to focus on management, social support, tolerance, or institutional environments rather than specific yellow-book instructional strategies (Zidan et al., 2024; Abdurrahman et al., 2026). This limitation matters because inclusion requires welcoming diverse learners and ensuring accessible, responsive instruction. The present study addresses this gap by examining Al-Miftah among students with learning difficulties at Nurul Qur'an Kraksaan Islamic Boarding School. Its contribution lies in connecting a pesantren-developed instructional innovation with inclusive learning needs, extending discussion from general method effectiveness toward differentiated religious education and offering evidence for adapting traditional learning practices to diverse student populations in inclusive pesantren education settings.

Based on this problem and research gap, the study asks how the Al-Miftah Method can support students with learning difficulties in reading and understanding the yellow book, and whether students receiving Al-Miftah demonstrate greater learning improvement than those receiving conventional instruction. The study examines changes in performance through pretest and posttest assessments, including sentence structure, contextual meaning, main ideas, and vocabulary. It also considers students' participation during learning activities to provide a view of the instructional process. The study aims to provide evidence that can inform teachers when designing learning that accommodates diverse abilities while maintaining traditions of classical Islamic education. The scope is limited to yellow-book learning through Al-Miftah at Nurul Qur'an Kraksaan Islamic Boarding School, while its broader objective is to contribute knowledge for developing more accessible and inclusive pesantren education. This objective addresses the community's need for equitable religious learning.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine how the Al-Miftah method is implemented to support students with learning difficulties in reading the yellow book at an Islamic boarding school. A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to understand learning practices, student experiences, teacher strategies, and contextual factors rather than measure effectiveness through statistical tests. Case study design is appropriate for exploring educational practices within their real-life institutional setting. Previous studies have documented the structured use of Al-Miftah for improving students' yellow-book reading competence, while recent research has emphasized the need for inclusive approaches in pesantren education (Fathoni & A'dlom, 2024; Azizah et al., 2025). Therefore, this design enables the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of how Al-Miftah is adapted to students' diverse learning needs and how such adaptations contribute to inclusive Islamic education research.

The research was conducted at Nurul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School in Kraksaan, Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia. The site was purposively selected because it provides yellow-book instruction through the Al-Miftah method and accommodates students with diverse learning characteristics. This setting is considered relevant for examining inclusive learning practices because pesantren are increasingly encouraged to develop educational environments that respond to differences in students' abilities and needs. Recent studies have highlighted the development of inclusive pesantren models and the importance of supportive educational practices for students with diverse conditions (Abdurrahman et al., 2026; Syarifah et al., 2025). The research participants consisted of Al-Miftah teachers, pesantren administrators, and selected students experiencing learning difficulties. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in Al-Miftah learning. The selection was intended to provide complementary perspectives on planning, implementation, learning experiences, and outcomes.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with Al-Miftah teachers, administrators, and selected students to obtain information about learning procedures, instructional adaptations, difficulties encountered, and perceived changes in students' yellow-book reading abilities. Observations were used to examine classroom interactions, teaching techniques, student participation, and the use of Al-Miftah learning materials during instructional activities. Document analysis covered lesson plans, learning modules, student assignments, assessment records, and other relevant institutional documents. The use of multiple data-collection techniques was intended to produce a comprehensive description of the learning process and reduce dependence on a single source. This approach is consistent with previous research showing that Al-Miftah learning involves structured instructional procedures and can be examined through students' learning processes and competency development (Fathurrohman et al., 2024; Nizar et al., 2025).

Data were analyzed interactively through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were organized, coded, compared, and categorized according to

themes related to Al-Miftah implementation, learning difficulties, instructional adaptation, student participation, and yellow-book reading development. The emerging themes were then interpreted by comparing information across participants and data sources. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation, member checking, and repeated observation. Source triangulation involved comparing information from teachers, administrators, and students, whereas technique triangulation compared interview, observation, and documentary evidence. Member checking was conducted by confirming important interpretations with relevant participants. These procedures were important because studies of Al-Miftah have reported improvements in yellow-book reading competence, while inclusive pesantren research emphasizes contextual and supportive practices (Zidan et al., 2024; Aziz et al., 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study examined changes in the yellow-book reading and comprehension abilities of students with learning difficulties following different instructional approaches. The study involved 12 male students aged 10–11 years who were divided into two groups: an experimental group receiving instruction using the Al-Miftah Method (n = 6) and a control group receiving conventional instruction (n = 6). The distribution of participants is presented in Table 1. Each group consisted of three students aged 10 years and three students aged 11 years. Thus, the two groups had the same distribution in terms of gender and age.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Experimental Group (n = 6)	Control Group (n = 6)	Total (n = 12)
Gender	Men (6)	Men (6)	12
Age Range	10 Years (3), 11 Years (3)	10 Years (3), 11 Years (3)	12

The students’ abilities were assessed through pretest and posttest activities conducted before and after the learning intervention. As illustrated in Figure 1, the assessment activities involved students completing tasks related to their ability to read and understand yellow-book texts. The assessment was conducted for both the experimental and control groups. Figure 1 presents documentation of the pretest and posttest activities and shows the assessment process used to identify changes in students’ learning outcomes.



Figure 1. Santri Pretest and Posttest Documentation

Table 2 presents the individual pretest and posttest scores of students in both groups. In the experimental group, pretest scores ranged from 20 to 48, while posttest scores ranged from 60 to 98. All six students in the experimental group obtained higher posttest scores than their pretest scores. The individual score increases ranged from 40 to 65 points. In the control group, pretest scores ranged from 25 to 40, while posttest scores ranged from 50 to 77. All students in the control group also obtained higher posttest scores than their pretest scores.

Table 2. Pretest and Posttest Results

Group	Respondent	Pretest (%)	Posttest (%)	Δ (Post-Pre)	N-Gain	Category
Experimental	Zaky	35	80	45	0.692	Medium
Experimental	Fathir	40	85	45	0.750	High
Experimental	Rofiq	30	75	45	0.643	Medium
Experimental	Alka	20	60	40	0.500	Medium
Experimental	Ismail	25	90	65	0.867	High
Experimental	Mirza	48	98	50	0.962	High
Experimental Mean	-	33.00	81.33	48.33	0.736	High
Control	Ufiq	35	65	30	0.462	Medium
Control	Zayyan	30	60	30	0.429	Medium
Control	Irsyad	30	65	35	0.500	Medium
Control	Dani	40	75	35	0.583	Medium
Control	Nauzan	25	50	25	0.333	Medium
Control	Abdil	33	77	44	0.657	Medium
Control Mean	—	32.17	65.33	33.17	0.494	Medium

The mean pretest score of the experimental group was 33.00, while the mean pretest score of the control group was 32.17. Following the learning intervention, the mean posttest score of the experimental group increased to 81.33, whereas the control group obtained a mean posttest score of 65.33. The mean score increase was 48.33 points in the experimental group and 33.17 points in the control group. Therefore, the difference in mean improvement between the two groups was 15.16 points.

The N-Gain scores also showed different levels of improvement between the two groups. The experimental group obtained an average N-Gain score of 0.736, which was classified as high. Individual N-Gain scores in this group ranged from 0.500 to 0.962. The control group obtained an average N-Gain score of 0.494, which was classified as medium, with individual N-Gain scores ranging from 0.333 to 0.657. The distribution of the N-Gain scores is presented in Table 2.

Table 3. Pre-Test and Post-Test Evaluation Materials

Indicator	Instrument Type	Number of Questions	Inquiry Details
Understanding Sentence Structure	Pre-Test	3	Determining subjects–predicates–objects/descriptions in Arabic sentences
Understanding the Meaning of Sentences	Pre-Test	3	Interpreting the meaning of a sentence based on the context of the short text
Defining the Main Idea	Pre-Test	2	Determine the main idea of the 2–3 sentences of the book text

Vocabulary Understanding	Pre-Test	4	Meaning of keywords in text vocabulary
Vocabulary Understanding	Post-Test	5	The meaning of vocabulary and terms is more varied
Understanding Sentence Structure	Post-Test	4	Identify the function of phrases in text
Understanding the Meaning of Paragraphs	Post-Test	4	Explain the meaning of 3-4 sentences of the book text
Summing up the main message	Post-Test	3	Summing up the message about the manners of seeking knowledge

Based on the evaluation materials presented in Table 3, the assessment covered several aspects of yellow-book text comprehension. The pretest included indicators related to sentence structure, sentence meaning, main ideas, and vocabulary. The posttest included vocabulary understanding, sentence structure, paragraph meaning, and the ability to summarize the main message. The number of questions varied according to the assessed indicator, with 12 questions in the pretest and 16 questions in the posttest.

Participatory observations were also conducted during the learning activities. In the experimental group, students were observed participating in reading activities, responding to teacher instructions, asking questions, and reading selected yellow-book texts. Students also participated in activities involving the identification and understanding of Arabic words and sentence structures. In the control group, students participated in conventional learning activities involving reading and explanation of the yellow-book material. The observation results recorded differences in students' participation during the learning process, particularly in their willingness to respond to questions and read unfamiliar texts.

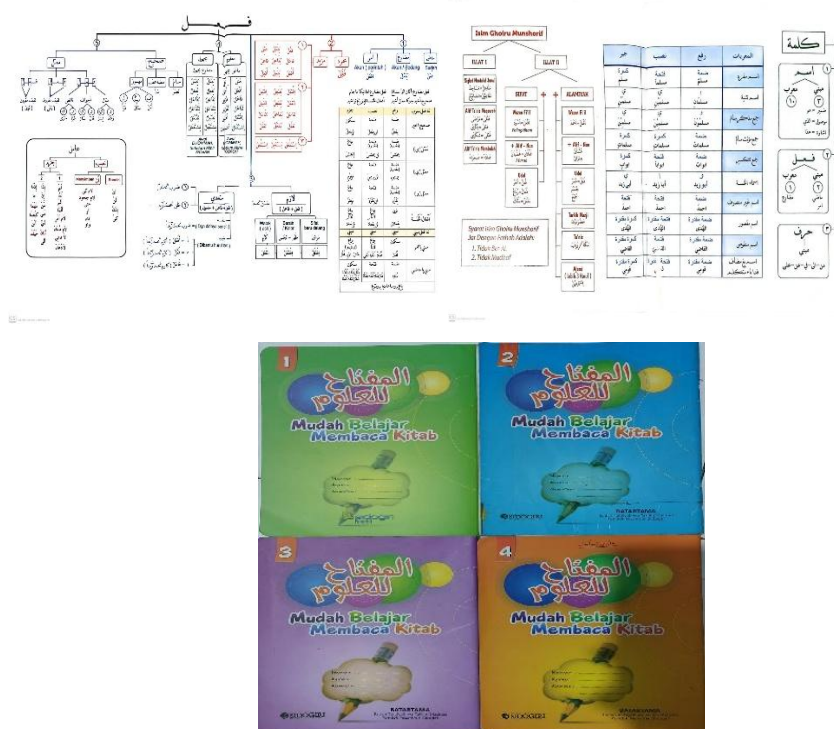


Figure 2. Cover and Content of the Book of Al-Miftah

As shown in Figure 2, the Al-Miftah li'l-Ulum book was used as the main learning material in the experimental group. The figure presents the cover and content of the Al-Miftah learning materials. The book consists of four volumes numbered from 1 to 4. Each volume represents a level in the learning sequence. The covers are presented in different colors, including green, blue, purple, and orange. Each volume also contains identification fields, including name, origin, and address.

Figure 2 further shows the physical presentation of the Al-Miftah learning materials used during the intervention. The materials contain Arabic learning content intended to support students in reading and understanding yellow-book texts. The four-volume structure provides sequential learning materials that were used during the instructional activities for the experimental group.

Overall, the pretest and posttest results show an increase in scores in both groups. The experimental group increased from a mean score of 33.00 to 81.33, while the control group increased from 32.17 to 65.33. The experimental group recorded a mean N-Gain of 0.736, categorized as high, whereas the control group recorded a mean N-Gain of 0.494, categorized as medium. The assessment and observation data were used to describe changes in students' learning outcomes and participation throughout the research process.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the Al-Miftah Method was associated with a greater improvement in yellow-book reading and comprehension among students with learning difficulties than conventional instruction. The experimental group increased from a mean pretest score of 33.00 to a posttest score of 81.33, while the control group increased from 32.17 to 65.33. The higher mean N-Gain obtained by the experimental group (0.736; high category) compared with the control group (0.494; medium category) indicates a stronger learning improvement following the Al-Miftah intervention. These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting that Al-Miftah can strengthen students' ability to read and understand the yellow book through systematic and structured learning procedures (Fathoni & A'dlom, 2024; Zidan et al., 2024). Similarly, Nizar et al. (2025) found that the implementation of Al-Miftah contributed to improving the standard of students' yellow-book reading competence. The present study extends these findings by examining Al-Miftah specifically among students experiencing learning difficulties, a population that has received comparatively limited attention in research on yellow-book learning.

The improvement observed in the experimental group can be understood in relation to the structured and sequential characteristics of Al-Miftah learning. The method organizes learning into progressive stages, enabling students to develop foundational knowledge before moving toward more complex Arabic texts. This characteristic is particularly relevant for students who experience difficulties in processing linguistic information. Previous research has demonstrated that Al-Miftah provides systematic learning procedures for developing yellow-book reading skills (Fathurrohman et al., 2024; Syarifuddin & Sukari, 2025). The present findings are consistent with this pattern, as students in the experimental group demonstrated improvements in sentence structure,

contextual meaning, vocabulary, and overall comprehension. However, the present study differs from much previous Al-Miftah research because its emphasis is not simply on improving general santri competence, but on examining its application among students with learning difficulties. This contextual adaptation represents an important extension of the existing literature.

The findings concerning student participation also provide an important dimension to the results. During the learning process, students receiving the Al-Miftah Method appeared more willing to participate, ask questions, and read unfamiliar yellow-book texts. This observation suggests that the learning process was not limited to improving test scores but also involved changes in students' engagement and confidence. Such findings are relevant to recent research on inclusive pesantren education, which emphasizes supportive learning environments and peer or institutional support in developing students' self-efficacy and independence (Azizah et al., 2025; Heridianto & Muhellah, 2026). Similarly, Abdurrahman et al. (2026) demonstrated the importance of developing pesantren-based educational practices that accommodate students with diverse learning needs. In this respect, the present study provides empirical support for the possibility of connecting an established pesantren learning method with inclusive educational practices. The difference from previous inclusive pesantren studies lies in the specific focus on the learning process of yellow-book literacy.

The findings also support the view that improving yellow-book literacy requires instructional strategies that are compatible with the characteristics of learners. Previous research on yellow-book learning has documented the diversity of methods used in pesantren, including systematic approaches designed to facilitate students' understanding of classical Arabic texts (Arif et al., 2023; Mahmud, 2025). Research on Al-Miftah has similarly shown that the method can facilitate students' acquisition of the linguistic foundations required for reading classical Islamic texts (Aziz et al., 2025; Nizar et al., 2025). The current study adds a different perspective by showing that the structured characteristics of Al-Miftah may also be relevant when instruction is directed toward students who experience learning difficulties. Thus, the contribution of this study is not merely confirming the effectiveness of Al-Miftah reported in previous studies, but demonstrating its potential applicability within a more inclusive learning context. This finding broadens the scope of Al-Miftah research from general competency development toward differentiated educational needs.

The study further contributes to the development of inclusive education in pesantren. Previous studies have primarily discussed inclusive pesantren in relation to tolerance, peer support, child-friendly management, and the development of educational environments that respect students' differences (Syarifah et al., 2025; Izzah et al., 2025). Other research has specifically highlighted the importance of inclusive Quranic education for children with special needs (Abdurrahman et al., 2026; Taufikin et al., 2025). In contrast, the present study addresses inclusion at the level of instructional methodology by examining how a pesantren-specific learning method can be used to facilitate access to yellow-book learning for students with learning difficulties. This represents a significant contribution because inclusion is not only concerned with providing access to educational institutions, but also with ensuring that students can meaningfully

participate in and benefit from the learning process. The findings therefore suggest that inclusive pesantren education can be strengthened through adaptation of existing instructional traditions rather than relying exclusively on externally developed educational models.

The novelty of this study lies in the intersection of three areas that have generally been examined separately: Al-Miftah-based yellow-book instruction, learning difficulties, and inclusive pesantren education. Previous Al-Miftah studies have largely focused on improving general yellow-book reading competence, curriculum implementation, or instructional effectiveness (Zidan et al., 2024; Syarifuddin & Sukari, 2025). Meanwhile, studies of inclusive pesantren have focused more broadly on management, tolerance, child-friendly environments, peer support, and educational inclusion (Azizah et al., 2025; Syarifah et al., 2025). The present study connects these research streams by positioning Al-Miftah as a pesantren-based instructional strategy for students with learning difficulties. Therefore, its novelty is primarily contextual and pedagogical: it demonstrates how an established traditional Islamic learning innovation can be oriented toward differentiated and more inclusive learning needs.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that pesantren can consider adapting existing learning methods according to students' learning characteristics rather than applying a uniform instructional model to all learners. The use of sequential materials, repeated practice, structured explanations, and gradual movement from basic linguistic elements toward more complex texts may provide a useful framework for supporting students who experience difficulties in yellow-book learning. This implication is consistent with the broader development of pesantren learning management, which emphasizes the importance of organizing instructional processes systematically while maintaining the distinctive traditions of Islamic boarding schools (Yamin et al., 2023). The study therefore contributes not only to the discussion of Al-Miftah but also to the broader agenda of improving educational accessibility within pesantren. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted within the context of the small sample and the specific setting of Nurul Qur'an Kraksaan Islamic Boarding School. Further studies involving larger samples, multiple pesantren, and inferential statistical testing are needed to establish the generalizability of these findings.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that the Al-Miftah Method provides a promising instructional approach for improving yellow-book reading and comprehension among students with learning difficulties. The main lesson learned is that structured, gradual, and systematic instruction can help students overcome difficulties in understanding sentence structures, contextual meanings, main ideas, and vocabulary while encouraging more active participation in learning. The implication of these findings is that pesantren can adapt established learning traditions, such as the Al-Miftah Method, to accommodate diverse learner needs and support more inclusive learning practices. The scientific contribution of this study lies in connecting Al-Miftah-based yellow-book instruction with inclusive education, thereby extending previous research that has primarily examined the method among general santri populations and demonstrating its potential application for students with learning difficulties. However, the findings

are limited by the small sample size, single research setting, and relatively limited intervention context. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples across multiple Islamic boarding schools, employ longer intervention periods, and apply appropriate inferential statistical analyses to examine the effectiveness, sustainability, and generalizability of the Al-Miftah Method for students with different learning needs.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author confirms that this study and the preparation of the manuscript were conducted without any conflicts of interest that could affect the research or its reporting.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

AI-assisted technology was employed during the manuscript preparation process as a supporting tool for language enhancement, manuscript structuring, and improvement of academic expression. All content produced with AI assistance was critically reviewed, edited, and verified by the author. The author remains fully responsible for the scientific accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript.

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