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# The Implementation of Problem-Solving-Based Fiqh Learning in Developing Critical Thinking Skills of Students at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of problem-solving-based Fiqh learning in developing students' critical thinking skills at Annuraniyah Vocational High School (SMK Annuraniyah) Sulang. The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation involving Fiqh teachers, students, and school administrators. Data analysis was conducted through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, supported by source and technique triangulation to ensure data validity. The findings reveal that problem-solving-based Fiqh learning was implemented through several stages, namely presenting contextual problems, identifying problems, seeking information and legal evidence (*dalil*), analyzing alternative solutions, and drawing conclusions. Empirical findings indicate that students became more active in expressing opinions, were able to analyze Fiqh-related issues based on Islamic legal sources, compare different viewpoints, and provide more logical arguments during classroom discussions. This learning approach also enabled students to connect Fiqh concepts with real-life issues they encountered in their daily lives. Supporting factors for the implementation included teachers' competencies, the availability of learning resources, and a school culture that encouraged discussion. Meanwhile, the challenges encountered were differences in students' abilities and limited instructional time. The study concludes that problem-solving-based Fiqh learning is effective in developing students' critical thinking skills while simultaneously strengthening their understanding and reasoning of Islamic law.



## Introduction

Changes in the characteristics of social life and the development of information require education to produce students who are not only able to memorize knowledge but also able to apply it when dealing with complex problems. The development of information and communication technology (ICT) also encourages educational institutions to develop learning management that is more effective, collaborative, and oriented toward the needs of 21st-century learners. The implementation of ICT in learning management has been shown to improve administrative efficiency, strengthen communication among educational stakeholders, and support improvements in the quality of educational services (Jaya, 2024). In this context, critical thinking skills have become an essential component of the educational process. Students need to be accustomed to understanding problems in depth, sorting and

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evaluating information, considering various perspectives, and making decisions based on justifiable reasoning. These needs also apply to Islamic education, which deals with various religious issues that continue to develop within society (Hayati et al., 2024; Ramadhan & Arsyad, 2025).

Fiqh learning has characteristics that provide opportunities for developing these abilities. Fiqh is not merely concerned with definitions or classifications of Islamic legal rulings but also with how Islamic regulations are understood and applied to human actions. Therefore, Fiqh learning is closely related to problems encountered in everyday life. Students may encounter various situations that require legal consideration, including matters of worship (*ibadah*), transactions and social relations (*muamalah*), social interactions, and developments in modern life. When learning is focused merely on verbal mastery of the material, students' opportunities to develop reasoning skills become limited (Listrianti et al., 2025; Salwa et al., 2025).

This condition demonstrates the importance of shifting the orientation of Fiqh learning from a predominantly informative approach toward learning that provides students with opportunities to engage in thinking processes. Teachers need to create learning situations that enable students to ask questions, examine information, seek legal foundations, and justify their opinions. In such learning, students are not positioned merely as recipients of answers but as active subjects who construct understanding through processes of inquiry and problem solving (Abdillah, Fitriana, & Arim, 2026).

One approach that possesses these characteristics is *problem solving*. This approach uses problems as the starting point for learning activities. Students are then guided to understand the problem, identify the information required, discuss alternative solutions, and formulate conclusions. Pedagogically, this process provides students with opportunities to engage in more complex cognitive activities than simply remembering learning materials. Studies on problem-based learning (PBL) indicate that problem-based learning can serve as a means of developing critical thinking skills through analysis, evaluation, argumentation, and problem-solving activities.

In Islamic education, this approach has increasingly strong relevance because the problems presented in learning can be connected to real-life situations while simultaneously being examined based on Islamic sources of knowledge. For example, Tohet and Maulidiya (2025) found that PBL in Islamic Religious Education provides students with opportunities to participate actively, think critically, and connect religious knowledge with real-life problems. Similarly, Mulyani, Akil, and Susanto (2025) demonstrated that integrating PBL into Islamic education can encourage critical thinking skills through discussions of social issues that are closely related to students' lives.

Studies more specifically related to Fiqh also demonstrate a similar tendency. Purba, Sinaga, and Haidir (2024) developed PBL-based Fiqh worksheets aimed at reducing the gap between theoretical understanding and its practical application while encouraging students' critical thinking skills. Meanwhile, Listrianti, Hidayah, and Lama (2025), through a qualitative case study, found that PBL-based Fiqh learning could create a more dynamic learning environment, increase student participation, and help students connect Fiqh concepts with real-life contexts.

Salwa, El-Yunusi, and Sholehuddin (2025) also showed that the implementation of PBL in Fiqh learning can be conducted through a process of problem orientation, student organization, solution seeking, development of learning outcomes, and evaluation. These findings demonstrate that Fiqh learning can be designed as an activity that positions students as the main actors in the process of solving problems.

Various previous studies have demonstrated that the implementation of *problem-based learning* (PBL) and *problem solving* in Islamic Religious Education and Fiqh contributes to improved learning outcomes, student participation, and critical thinking skills. Studies by Tohet and Maulidiya (2025), Mulyani, Akil, and Susanto (2025), Purba, Sinaga, and Haidir (2024), and Listrianti, Hidayah, and Lama (2025) indicate that problem-based learning can encourage students to become more actively involved in analyzing problems and connecting religious learning materials with real-life situations.

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Nevertheless, most of these studies have focused on the effectiveness of learning models, the development of learning materials, or the measurement of improvements in critical thinking skills through quantitative approaches. Consequently, there is still limited understanding of how students' critical thinking processes develop during Fiqh learning. Few studies have explained how students identify religious problems, trace relevant *dalil* and sources of Islamic law, compare different arguments, evaluate alternative solutions, and formulate decisions based on principles of Islamic law within authentic learning situations.

This research gap is important to investigate because Fiqh learning is not merely intended to produce correct answers but also to develop students' reasoning abilities in dealing with religious issues that continue to evolve. Understanding how critical thinking skills develop can provide deeper insights into how Fiqh learning contributes to the development of students' Islamic legal reasoning, particularly at the vocational high school level, where learning is closely connected to practical issues in everyday life.

To address this gap, this study employs a qualitative case study approach to examine the implementation of problem-solving-based Fiqh learning at Annuraniyah Vocational High School, Sulang. The research focuses not only on the outcomes achieved by students but also on the process through which critical thinking skills are developed, as reflected in activities involving problem identification, information and *dalil* seeking, argument analysis, evaluation of alternative solutions, and decision-making based on Islamic law.

Recent research on PBL and Islamic Religious Education at the vocational high school level also indicates that vocational schools provide an important context for examining problem-based learning. A quasi-experimental study conducted at a vocational high school in Indonesia in 2026 found an effect of PBL on students' critical thinking skills in Islamic Religious Education. This finding reinforces the importance of conducting research in vocational school settings; however, the study employed a quantitative approach. Therefore, qualitative research that explores the implementation process and students' learning experiences still offers a distinct contribution.

Based on this consideration, this study offers the perspective that critical thinking skills in Fiqh learning should be understood as a process of Islamic legal reasoning. This process includes the ability to recognize problems, determine relevant information, identify legal foundations, compare arguments, evaluate alternatives, and formulate decisions. From this perspective, *problem solving* is not merely a method for finding answers but a learning mechanism that connects Fiqh knowledge with critical thinking skills.

The research context at Annuraniyah Vocational High School, Sulang, provides an opportunity to examine this process more closely. The school's environment, which integrates general education and religious education, allows Fiqh learning to be developed not merely as a process of knowledge transfer but also as a process of shaping students' ways of thinking when dealing with religious issues.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to analyze the implementation of problem-solving-based Fiqh learning at Annuraniyah Vocational High School, Sulang, particularly in relation to the development of students' abilities to analyze problems, evaluate information and opinions, construct arguments, and formulate solutions based on Islamic law. This study also identifies the factors that support and hinder the implementation of this approach.

## Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was selected because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of problem-solving-based Fiqh learning and the process through which students develop critical-religious reasoning within the natural context of classroom learning, rather than statistically testing relationships among variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The research was conducted at Annuraniyah Vocational High School, Rembang Regency, Central Java, during the first semester of the 2026/2027 academic year. The research site was selected purposively because the school had implemented Fiqh learning that provided opportunities for discussion, problem analysis, and the resolution of religious issues relevant to students' daily lives.

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The research informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their level of involvement in and knowledge of the learning process under investigation. The informants consisted of one Fiqh teacher as the primary informant, one vice principal for curriculum affairs, one vice principal for student affairs, and eight students who actively participated in Fiqh learning. The students were selected by considering variations in academic ability, participation in discussions, and involvement in learning activities to obtain diverse information regarding their experiences with problem-solving-based learning.

Data were collected over a period of two months, from July to August 2026. Observations were conducted during eight Fiqh learning sessions, with each session lasting 90 minutes. The observations focused on teachers' activities in managing the learning process, the types of problems presented, the discussion process, the use of learning resources, and students' responses in analyzing and solving Fiqh-related problems. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide developed according to the research focus. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and was recorded with the informants' consent before being transcribed verbatim. Documentation was used to complement the data through an analysis of learning plans, teaching modules, student worksheets, group discussion outcomes, reflection notes, activity photographs, and school documents relevant to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data analysis was conducted simultaneously throughout the data collection process, following the model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data condensation stage, the researcher conducted open coding of interview transcripts, observation notes, and research documents to identify information relevant to the research focus. Initial codes with similar meanings were then grouped into broader categories. These categories were subsequently developed into major themes that explained the implementation of problem-solving-based Fiqh learning.

To ensure analytical transparency, the coding process followed the sequence: raw data → codes → categories → themes → interpretation. For example, the student's statement, “We searched for *dalil* from several sources before determining the answer,” was coded as *legal reference tracing*. This code was then grouped into the category *identification of legal foundations*, which subsequently became part of the theme *development of critical-religious reasoning*. This theme led to the interpretation that problem-solving-based Fiqh learning encourages students to formulate decisions through reasoning grounded in *dalil* and argumentation.

The data display stage involved organizing the findings into systematic narrative descriptions based on the research themes, namely learning planning, implementation of *problem solving*, development of critical-religious reasoning, supporting factors, and inhibiting factors. The final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, was conducted continuously by comparing data from various sources until consistent and credible patterns of findings were identified.

To ensure data trustworthiness, the study applied source triangulation and technique triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the Fiqh teacher, students, and school administrators. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, the study employed an *audit trail* by maintaining interview transcripts, field notes, coding records, and analytical memos used throughout the research process. This documentation enabled the analytical process to be traced and reviewed, thereby strengthening the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

## Results and Discussion

The research findings indicate that the implementation of *problem solving* transformed the interaction pattern in Fiqh learning from a teacher-centered approach toward a student-centered learning process. The teacher did not immediately provide answers but instead presented cases that students were required to analyze first. This condition was observed

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during a lesson on *muamalah* concerning buying and selling transactions through online marketplaces. The teacher asked students to analyze the legal status of *pre-order* transactions commonly practiced in online commerce. Students subsequently discussed the elements of the contract (*akad*), the object of the transaction, and the relevant Islamic legal provisions. Observation findings showed that most students actively asked questions and searched for references before expressing their opinions. This finding is consistent with the statement of one of the teachers:

"I do not immediately provide answers to the students. I ask them to find the *dalil* first and then discuss whether the case is in accordance with Fiqh principles. Through this process, they learn to present reasons rather than merely state the ruling."

A similar point was expressed by one of the students:

"Usually, we look for answers in books or on the internet first and then compare them with our friends' opinions. If there are differences, we have to explain the legal basis."

The learning material was not merely delivered through teacher explanations but was used as a basis for understanding particular problems. The teacher first directed students toward situations or cases related to the material being studied. The presentation of cases functioned as a stimulus. Students did not immediately receive answers but were asked to understand the problems presented. During this process, they began to identify what information was already known and what additional information needed to be sought. This change indicates that Fiqh learning was beginning to shift from the reproduction of knowledge toward the construction of knowledge. Students were given opportunities to develop understanding through activities involving information seeking and verification. This finding is consistent with Listrianti et al. (2025), who found that PBL in Fiqh learning can increase student engagement and help students connect Fiqh concepts with real-life situations.

The initial stage of the learning process demonstrated the importance of students' ability to recognize the core of a problem. Students were guided to distinguish between facts contained in a case and the legal questions that needed to be answered. Although this activity may appear simple, it actually constitutes a fundamental component of critical thinking. Students need to understand that not all information in a case has the same status. Some information represents the main facts, whereas other information serves as contextual background. In Fiqh learning, this ability is important because legal issues are often influenced by the circumstances surrounding them. Therefore, students need to understand the context before reaching a conclusion. This pattern corresponds to the characteristics of PBL, which positions problems as the starting point of the learning process. Tohet and Maulidiya (2025) found that PBL can encourage students to become actively involved in analyzing and solving problems in Islamic education learning.

One characteristic that distinguishes *problem solving* in Fiqh learning from problem-based learning in general subjects is the need for Islamic legal foundations. After understanding the problem, students were directed to search for references and *dalil* related to the issue. This activity meant that students could not rely solely on personal opinions. They needed to identify information that could support their conclusions. The teacher played a role in guiding students to ensure that the sources they used were relevant to the problems under discussion. This process of tracing sources can be understood as a form of religious literacy. Students learned that religious knowledge needs to be understood through appropriate sources rather than merely through information circulating in their social environment or digital media (Fuadi, Arim, & Fitriana, 2025). At this point, *problem solving* contributed to the development of an academic attitude toward religious learning. Students were accustomed to connecting conclusions with supporting evidence or foundations (Purba, Sinaga, & Haidir, 2024; Wutsqo & Al Haidary, 2025).

Group discussion constituted an important component of the learning process. Students were given opportunities to present their reasoning and respond to other students' opinions. Differences in answers were used as material for examining the strength of arguments. Through this process, students learned that an opinion could not necessarily be accepted merely because it was expressed confidently. An opinion needed to be supported by clear

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reasons relevant to the issue being discussed. The teacher did not always provide an immediate decision when differences of opinion emerged. Instead, the teacher directed students to return to the sources and reasoning underlying their respective positions. This interaction pattern demonstrates a shift in the teacher's role. The teacher functioned as a facilitator and guide of the thinking process, while students were given space to develop their arguments. This finding is consistent with Mulyani et al. (2025), who found that PBL in Islamic education can develop evaluative abilities through the discussion of real-life problems and reflective activities (Mulyani, Akil, & Susanto, 2025; Tohet & Maulidiya, 2025).

Students' critical thinking skills did not stop at their ability to produce answers. The next stage involved evaluating whether the proposed solutions were genuinely consistent with the information and legal foundations that had been identified. During the learning activities, students were encouraged to compare different opinions and consider the reasoning underlying each position. This process helped them understand that Fiqh issues may involve different perspectives, each supported by its own line of reasoning.

For example, during a classroom activity, the teacher presented a case concerning payment practices using a *paylater* system. One student group presented the following argument:

"According to our group, the use of paylater needs to be examined based on the underlying contract first. If there is an additional charge in the form of interest due to late payment, it may involve *riba*. However, if the charge is an administrative fee agreed upon from the beginning, its legal status needs to be examined further based on the opinions of Islamic scholars."

This argument demonstrates that students were not merely providing a right-or-wrong answer but had begun to identify the problem, trace its legal basis, and evaluate various possible rulings. Thus, the learning process did not simply train students to memorize Islamic legal rulings but helped them understand the reasoning underlying a particular legal conclusion. The ability to evaluate opinions has become increasingly important because students live in an information environment in which they can encounter numerous religious answers with varying degrees of validity. Siregar, Nurmayani, and Junaidi (2025) likewise positioned critical thinking as an important competency in Islamic Religious Education and developed a PBL model to strengthen students' abilities to deal with real-life problems.

The final stage of learning involved formulating solutions. After identifying the problem, seeking information, examining *dalil*, and discussing different opinions, students formulated conclusions. The solutions were directed toward addressing the problem while considering the foundations of Islamic law. Thus, the problem-solving process did not stop at the question, "What is the answer?" but developed into the more fundamental question, "Why was this answer chosen?" This aspect represents a major contribution of the study. Problem-solving-based Fiqh learning can be understood as a process of developing students' Islamic legal reasoning. Such reasoning develops when students connect real-life situations, Fiqh concepts, legal sources, arguments, and decisions. This finding reinforces Purba et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of developing PBL-based Fiqh learning materials to bridge theoretical understanding and practical application while simultaneously improving critical thinking skills.

The success of learning was closely related to the teacher's ability to manage the learning process. Teachers needed to select problems appropriate to students' developmental levels and learning objectives. Teachers also needed to avoid providing answers too quickly. When answers are consistently given before students conduct their own inquiry, the function of *problem solving* becomes diminished. Therefore, stimulating questions served as an important instrument for directing students' thinking. During discussions, teachers could ask questions such as: What is the core of the problem? What information is needed? What is the basis for the opinion being presented? Are there alternative solutions? Why was a particular solution selected? This pattern positioned the teacher as a facilitator who guided the thinking process without taking over students' thinking (Listrianti, Hidayah, & Lama, 2025; Siregar, Nurmayani, & Junaidi, 2025).

The availability of learning resources was another factor supporting the learning process. Students needed books, teaching materials, religious sources, and references that could be

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used to verify information. In addition to learning resources, the school environment also influenced the success of learning activities. Discussions were more likely to proceed effectively when students felt that they had sufficient space to ask questions and express their opinions (Robbi, Arim, & Fitriana, 2025). This condition demonstrates that *problem solving* is not merely a teaching technique but requires a supportive learning ecosystem that encourages students' intellectual activities (Listrianti et al., 2025; Mulyani et al., 2025). This finding was also supported by the statement of the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, who explained that the school supported learning approaches oriented toward student activities:

"Our teachers are encouraged to use learning approaches that make students actively discuss and seek information independently. In Fiqh learning, the problem-solving approach is quite appropriate because students do not merely receive the material but learn to analyze problems that they encounter in their daily lives."

This statement indicates that the implementation of problem-solving-based Fiqh learning was supported not only by the subject teacher but also by school policies that provided opportunities for the development of active learning.

The implementation of learning also encountered differences in students' abilities. Some students were able to understand problems and locate information quickly, whereas others required further explanation and assistance. This difference represented a challenge because *problem solving* requires students to participate actively. Teachers needed to organize groups proportionally and provide assistance to students experiencing difficulties. In this context, successful learning should not necessarily be measured by the uniformity of students' answers. More importantly, it should be reflected in the emergence of thinking processes demonstrating that students attempted to understand the problem and provide reasons for their conclusions (Wutsqo & Al Haidary, 2025; Siregar et al., 2025).

Table 1. Findings on the Development of Students' Critical-Religious Reasoning

| Problem-Solving Stage | Student Activities | Indicators of Critical-Religious Reasoning |
|---|---|---|
| Problem identification | Understanding Fiqh cases | Recognizing legal issues |
| Information seeking | Tracing *dalil* and references | Islamic legal literacy |
| Comparison of opinions | Comparing arguments | Critical analysis |
| Argument evaluation | Assessing the strength of reasons | Legal evaluation |
| Decision making | Determining solutions | Islamic legal reasoning |

Problem-based learning requires relatively more time. Students need time to understand cases, search for sources, discuss issues, formulate arguments, present their findings, and engage in reflection. This condition differs from learning that relies primarily on teacher explanations. Therefore, the implementation of *problem solving* requires realistic time planning. Teachers need to determine the complexity of problems according to the available instructional time. Problems that are too broad may prevent the learning process from being completed, whereas problems that are too simple may not provide sufficient intellectual challenge (Tohet & Maulidiya, 2025; Fawait, Ayuni, & Sari, 2026).

The research findings demonstrate that problem-solving-based Fiqh learning encourages students to formulate legal decisions through a process of problem identification, *dalil* seeking, comparison of opinions, argument evaluation, and solution formulation. This process occurs because students do not receive answers directly but must investigate the problems they encounter. Such situations require students to use analytical, interpretive, and evaluative abilities simultaneously. The Fiqh teacher explained that the most visible change was not merely in students' ability to answer questions but in their ability to provide reasons for the answers they selected:

"The difference can be seen when students are asked to explain the legal reasoning behind their answers. They no longer immediately answer halal or haram but begin to mention the *dalil*, scholars' opinions, and the conditions that influence the legal ruling."

This mechanism differs from Fiqh learning oriented toward knowledge transmission. In

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conventional learning, students tend to receive predetermined legal conclusions. In contrast, in problem-solving-based learning, students are involved in a reasoning process that enables them to understand the rationale behind a particular legal provision. Thus, the development of critical thinking skills does not emerge merely from discussion but from students' need to connect real-life problems with relevant Islamic legal sources and arguments.

This finding supports the studies of Tohet and Maulidiya (2025) and Mulyani et al. (2025), which demonstrate that PBL can develop critical thinking skills in Islamic Religious Education. However, this study offers a different perspective because it does not conceptualize critical thinking merely as a general competency but as part of the process of developing Islamic legal reasoning.

Theoretically, this study generates a conceptual model of Critical-Religious Reasoning in Fiqh Learning. The model demonstrates that *problem solving* functions as a pedagogical mechanism connecting critical thinking skills with the process of *Islamic legal reasoning*. The novelty of the study lies in explaining how students construct legal decisions through systematic reasoning stages rather than merely examining the effectiveness of a particular learning model.

The contribution of this study can be identified in three aspects. First, Fiqh learning becomes more contextual because the problems discussed originate from situations that students can recognize in their daily lives. Second, the learning process encourages active participation. Students do not merely listen to explanations but participate in seeking, examining, and presenting information (Sukarno, Fitriana, & Arim, 2025). Third, the learning process establishes a relationship between religious knowledge and decision-making skills. Students learn that understanding Islamic law requires reasoning and careful consideration. This finding is consistent with Listrianti et al. (2025), who found that PBL can help students connect Fiqh learning with real-life contexts.

Based on the review of previous studies, three research gaps provide the foundation for this study. First, some studies on PBL and critical thinking employ quantitative designs and therefore primarily present relationships or effects of learning models on ability scores. This study uses a qualitative case study and consequently focuses on the learning process. Second, studies on PBL in Islamic education frequently discuss Islamic Religious Education in general. This study focuses specifically on Fiqh as a field directly related to legal issues encountered in everyday life. Third, this study does not conceptualize critical thinking merely as an academic ability. Instead, it places this ability within the framework of Islamic legal reasoning, namely the ability to understand problems, identify legal foundations, compare arguments, evaluate alternatives, and formulate decisions.

Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in conceptualizing problem-solving-based Fiqh learning as a process of developing students' critical-religious reasoning within a vocational high school environment. This perspective differs from studies that merely examine the effectiveness of PBL. The present study seeks to explain how the learning process can transform students' activities from simply receiving answers into constructing reasoned arguments and informed decisions.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that problem-solving-based Fiqh learning at Annuraniyah Vocational High School, Sulang, encourages students to develop analytical thinking skills in understanding and solving Fiqh-related problems based on Islamic legal sources. Its implementation is supported by teacher competence, learning resources, and a supportive school environment, while the main challenges include differences in students' abilities and limited instructional time.

The contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing *problem solving* as an approach that not only develops critical thinking skills but also fosters critical-religious reasoning, namely the ability to connect real-life problems with Islamic legal sources and arguments. This finding has implications for teachers in developing Fiqh learning that is more contextual, dialogical, and oriented toward students' reasoning processes.

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This study is limited to a single school and employs a case study design; therefore, its findings cannot be broadly generalized. Future research could expand the research context to include diverse types of schools and develop instruments to examine the development of students' critical-religious reasoning.

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