

Using the bahtsul masa'il method to nurture critical thinking skills in santri during fiqh lessons at an najah gondang islamic boarding school sragen

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how the Bahtsul Masa'il method is used to foster critical thinking skills among students (santri) at the AnNajah Gondang Islamic Boarding School, particularly in Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) classes. The research is guided by three core questions: why this method was chosen for Fiqh learning, how it supports the development of critical thinking, and what challenges arise during its implementation. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through observations, indepth interviews, and documentation. The findings show that Bahtsul Masa'il is favored because it encourages students to engage more actively, think critically, and analyze religious issues from both classical and contemporary perspectives. In practice, the method is applied through open discussion forums where students are invited to identify problems, build arguments, and propose solutions based on Islamic legal reasoning. These discussions gradually nurture a more independent and critical way of thinking. However, the implementation is not without challenges. Differences in students' abilities, limited access to relevant references, the need for skilled moderators, and time constraints during discussions all present obstacles. Still, despite these hurdles, Bahtsul Masa'il remains a powerful tool in shaping students' intellectual character and helping them grow into independent thinkers.

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Introduction

Critical thinking is understood as the ability to reason effectively, both theoretically and descriptively (Prameswari, Suharno, & Sarwanto, 2018). According to Robert Ennis, critical thinking involves reflective thinking and the capacity to make sound decisions. This implies that being critical does not merely involve drawing conclusions or forming arguments, but also the ability to evaluate statements thoroughly. The capacity for critical thinking is especially vital for students and santri in today's world, which is marked by social complexities and rapid developments in law and its interpretation. When an issue is not properly verified, it may lead to vague or unclear legal judgments.

Bahtsul Masa'il has been introduced to santri as a method to train critical thinking and argumentation skills. The term "Bahtsul Masa'il" is a compound of two words: "Bahts," meaning discussion, and "Masa'il" (the plural of "masalah"), meaning issues or problems. Linguistically, Bahtsul Masa'il refers to the discussion of various problems. This activity has long been practiced, especially among traditionalist pesantren, and was later formalized as part of the

Nahdlatul Ulama religious organization (Sri Jumini, Jauharotul Insiyyah, and Ahmad Khoiri, 2020: 50–54). During the 27th NU Congress in Yogyakarta in 1989, Bahtsul Masa'il was designated to compile, examine, and resolve both theoretical and actual issues that require immediate legal clarity (Ahmad Zahro, 2004).

In practice, santri are guided to think critically, dynamically, and democratically when addressing religious and social issues. This activity also enhances emotional bonds and solidarity among students. While the method has its advantages, its implementation in newer pesantren can present certain challenges and limitations.

Bahtsul Masa'il, literally meaning "problem discussion," is a crucial learning method in the pesantren environment. It is not only used to deliberate on religious matters but also serves as a platform for santri to sharpen their critical and analytical thinking. Within the pesantren tradition, Bahtsul Masa'il is typically carried out through discussions or deliberations involving various participants to explore contemporary issues affecting the Muslim community ranging from social and political concerns to daily life matters.

For santri, Bahtsul Masa'il aims not only to develop scientific character and Islamic brotherhood but also to nurture mutual respect and the courage to express individual opinions (Anshor, 2012). Moreover, it teaches students how to solve social and religious issues by referencing the views of classical Islamic jurists documented in the "kitab kuning" (traditional Islamic books), while encouraging them to express their arguments in a scholarly manner.

Pondok Pesantren An Najah, established in 1998 in Gondang Tani, Gondang Subdistrict, Sragen Regency, Central Java, upholds the Ahlul sunnah wal Jama'ah doctrine and operates under the Nahdlatul Ulama umbrella. The pesantren offers formal education including SMP An Najah, SMK An Najah, and MA Nahdlatul Ulama Gondang. It also provides a Diniyah (MADIN) program covering subjects such as Fiqh, Nahwu Shorof, Akidah Akhlak, and Quranic Tafsir.

In its educational practices, Pondok Pesantren An Najah still primarily employs classical methods such as lectures and discussions. This highlights a limitation in the variety of pedagogical approaches currently applied. One of the obstacles to advancing the teaching-learning process is the shortage of resident staff. Presently, the administration is handled by nonresident teachers, which affects the supervision and comfort of new students adapting to a communal environment with unfamiliar individuals.

To address these limitations, the teaching staff has introduced the Salafiyah system, including Muhadharah and Bahtsul Masa'il. Muhadharah is a weekly extracurricular activity aimed at training santri in sermon delivery, hosting events, and leading recitations. Bahtsul Masa'il, held twice a month, serves as a platform for practicing critical thinking and structured argumentation. It functions not only as a religious learning tool but also as training in wise decisionmaking and logical analysis.

For santri, Bahtsul Masa'il plays an important role in broadening their perspectives and equipping them with more structured and in-depth thinking abilities. Through this method, they are taught not to accept information passively, but to verify and analyze it first. Thus, Bahtsul Masa'il not only deepens their religious understanding but also shapes them into intelligent, critical individuals ready to face life's challenges.

At Pondok Pesantren An Najah Gondang, Bahtsul Masa'il serves as a medium to discuss legal issues related to fiqh, rooted in the scholarly tradition of pesantren. In response to modern developments and diverse legal needs, Bahtsul Masa'il aligns classical Islamic jurisprudence with emerging contemporary issues, whether as practical solutions or academic discussion.

The primary aim of Bahtsul Masa'il is to enhance santri's cognitive abilities so they can think more critically within the pesantren setting. Furthermore, they are expected to become the successors of previous scholars (ulama salaf) in addressing various societal problems. In essence, Bahtsul Masa'il at Pondok Pesantren An Najah Gondang is meant to develop students into thoughtful and discerning individuals who are capable of continuing the intellectual legacy of traditional Islamic scholars.

The relationship between critical thinking and Bahtsul Masa'il in pesantren-based learning creates a vibrant and engaging educational atmosphere. It fosters a spirit of

"fastabiqul khairat" (competing in doing good deeds) among students when discussing the lessons at hand.

Results and Discussion

1. Definition of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is commonly defined as the ability to think clearly and rationally about what one knows, believes, or does in a thoughtful and deliberate manner. Ennis (1985) describes critical thinking as the capacity to systematically assess claims and arguments, identify assumptions, distinguish facts from opinions, and draw valid conclusions based on available evidence. This ability forms the foundation for logical reasoning and problemsolving.

In the context of Islam, critical thinking aligns closely with the concept of *tabayyun*, which refers to the act of seeking clarity and certainty regarding the truth of a particular matter in a meticulous and cautious way. Islam encourages individuals to be discerning, to avoid hastily accepting or concluding information without verifying its authenticity through reliable sources. This principle is exemplified in Surah AlHujurat, verse 6:

"O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful." (Q.S. AlHujurat: 6)

This verse underscores the importance of *tabayyun* to prevent social discord and misjudgment. It reflects a harmonious link between Islamic teachings and the essence of critical thinking. In educational settings, cultivating critical thinking is vital for student development. According to Prameswari, Suharno, and Sarwanto (2018), critical thinking is a key component of effective learning and essential for students, including santri (Islamic boarding school students), particularly in understanding religious sciences such as fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). Emily R. Lai outlines several characteristics of critical thinking, including:

- a. Analyzing arguments, claims, or evidence.
- b. Drawing conclusions through inductive or deductive reasoning.
- c. Evaluating or assessing ideas critically.
- d. Making decisions or solving problems based on reasoned judgment.

Paul and Elder (2006) expand upon this by identifying essential components of critical thinking:

- a. Clarification: Understanding and articulating information clearly.
- b. Interpretation: Structuring arguments or data to form conclusions.
- c. Evaluation: Assessing the credibility and validity of arguments or sources.
- d. Inference: Drawing logical conclusions from the available evidence.
- e. Analysis: Identifying and examining reasons and evidence that support an argument.
- f. Justification: Providing strong, wellreasoned support for conclusions drawn.

These elements serve as a framework for critical engagement with problems, especially in educational contexts such as pesantren. A santri who questions ambiguities or seeks clarification demonstrates critical thinking in action. This process plays a pivotal role in promoting an active and creative learning environment.

Facione (2011), through *The Delphi Report*, emphasizes that critical thinking not only supports daily decisionmaking but is foundational in academic learning. In religious education, santri are encouraged to critically analyze and evaluate religious texts. In broader socioreligious contexts, critical theory, as described by Habermas (1971), becomes a tool to address social injustice and challenge existing power structures. In pesantren, this means encouraging critical analysis of religious norms and social realities to foster deeper understanding and more relevant solutions.

One practical manifestation of critical thinking in pesantren is through *Bahtsul Masaila* structured forum for addressing contemporary socioreligious issues. This method promotes

tabayyun, requiring santri to verify information before drawing conclusions, thereby reinforcing a critical approach to problemsolving.

The *Bahtsul Masail* process involves:

- a. Analysis: Examining problems deeply, identifying core issues, and understanding their broader context.
- b. Evaluation: Critically assessing legal sources (e.g., classical Islamic texts) for relevance and credibility.
- c. Synthesis: Integrating diverse perspectives and evidence to formulate comprehensive solutions.

As a learning model, *Bahtsul Masail* aligns with ProblemBased Learning (PBL). It fosters active participation, interaction, collaboration, and independent problemsolving among students. According to Adib (2022), *Bahtsul Masail* incorporates a multidisciplinary approach involving tradition, methodical reasoning (*manhaji*), and analytical frameworks derived from the 1992 NU National Congress in Lampung. This methodology is particularly effective in fostering student engagement and enhancing critical thinking in the study of fiqh. Research published in the *Jurnal Edukasi* confirms the effectiveness of this method in improving both critical thinking and student participation. Chothibul Muttaqin (2020) emphasizes the value of *Bahtsul Masail* in applying classical Islamic legal insights to contemporary challenges. Ahmad Irfan Fauzi (2022) also notes that this approach equips santri with critical analysis skills and a problemsolving mindset relevant to reallife social and religious contexts.

2. Critical Thinking as a ProblemSolving Framework and Bahtsul Masail as an Intellectual Tradition

Critical thinking involves deep analysis, the pursuit of evidencebased solutions, and the ability to defend one's conclusions while considering and evaluating opposing viewpoints. In this way, it becomes an essential life skill for any individual especially students of Islamic education who must navigate complex religious and social realities. *Bahtsul Masail* is deeply rooted in the intellectual tradition of *pesantren* and the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization. From the grassroots to the central leadership (PBNU), it functions as the highest forum for addressing contemporary religious issues. It integrates a Problem Solving Method, empowering participants to critically and creatively address personal and communal challenges. Teachers or facilitators present reallife cases, which students then analyze collaboratively, thus promoting intellectual independence and improving academic outcomes.

Abdul Majid highlights that the Problem Solving Method encourages learners to observe, reflect, and analyze problems to find appropriate solutions based on sound reasoning. This method allows students to experience the full cycle of inquiry, evidence gathering, and conclusionmaking.

Each *Bahtsul Masail* session involves five key roles:

- a. Moderator: Leads the session and ensures structured discussion.
- b. Musahih: Validates conclusions and guides the discussion with scholarly authority.
- c. Notetaker: Documents all proceedings and references used.
- d. Participants: Engage in discussion, often bringing diverse references for argumentation.

3. Historical Context of Bahtsul Masail

Bahtsul Masail predates the formal establishment of NU and was historically practiced in *pesantren* communities as a way for scholars to guide society through religious dilemmas. After the founding of NU in 1926, *Bahtsul Masail* became institutionalized and was later given its own organizational body: *Lajnah Bahtsul Masail Diniyah*, as recommended during the 1989 NU Congress in Yogyakarta.

A key milestone in its development occurred in 1992 during the National Conference of Ulama in Lampung, where a shift in methodology was adopted from merely citing established opinions (*qauli*) to applying a more procedural and analytical approach

(*manhaji*), based on the legal reasoning methods of the four major Islamic schools of thought (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali). This transition reflects the dynamic and adaptive nature of *Bahtsul Masail* as a medium for critical inquiry and contextualized *ijtihad* (legal reasoning) in response to evolving social realities.

The *Bahtsul Masa'il* method, or *musyawarah* (deliberation), aims to foster students' analytical and critical thinking skills in understanding the content of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), enhance their proficiency in using Arabic grammar (*nahwusharaf*), and develop their ability to collaboratively identify and solve contemporary problems related to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) within a collective setting (Hidayatulloh, 2018:185). Participants in *Bahtsul Masa'il* are held accountable for their statements and are expected to critically analyze the information they present by testing its accuracy. In practice, *Bahtsul Masa'il* consists of several structured phases: identifying and formulating issues, group collaboration in building arguments, presenting discussion outcomes, and concluding with group reflection and evaluation. This systematic approach nurtures a sustainable pattern of critical thinking. Thus, the method serves not only as a medium for studying *fiqh* but also as a platform for shaping openminded, analytical, and solutionoriented intellectual character among students. At Pondok Pesantren An Najah Gondang, *Bahtsul Masa'il* is a valuable platform for *santri* to study *fiqh* deeply while incorporating insights from others. Critical thinking in this context involves identifying problems based on prior experiences, analyzing connections between issues, and seeking solutions in different situations. The *Bahtsul Masa'il* tradition offers several key benefits:

A Developing *santri* who think critically and scientifically.

- a. Encouraging students to express their opinions.
- b. Promoting collaborative problemsolving among students.
- c. Guiding them in selecting one or several wellreasoned answers based on thorough consideration.
- d. Cultivating listening skills, especially to opinions differing from their own.
- e. Instilling tolerance, democratic values, and systematic reasoning.

Fiqh learning through *Bahtsul Masa'il* can be assessed through several indicators, such as students' comprehension of the issues discussed (Ahmad Munjin Nasih & Lilik Nur Khofifah, 2009:58). Additionally, choosing the strongest answer from among many reflects the students' ability to assess relevance and coherence with the discussed problem.

During *Bahtsul Masa'il* sessions, debates and differing viewpoints often arise among groups. This lively exchange, backed by diverse references, highlights the active learning aspect of the forum. Through such debates, students learn to analyze arguments from various perspectives. With proper analytical processes, students arrive at wellfounded conclusions. A critical thinker must be able to evaluate arguments from multiple angles not just supportive ones, but also opposing views (Rochim, 2018). If there is no response from the participants, the moderator may repeat or rephrase the question to stimulate discussion. If a student answers correctly, the moderator offers praise and motivates others to participate and improve.

In *Bahtsul Masa'il*, students are encouraged to voice opinions, construct arguments, and critique others during discussions on *fiqh* and religious issues. If students hesitate to respond, *kyai* (Islamic scholars) provide stimuli to provoke thought and expression, often with motivational praise. This process fosters gradual engagement with *fiqh* and helps build student confidence, tolerance, and a strong desire to learn.

Bahtsul Masa'il is a highly effective learning strategy for developing critical thinking, particularly in *fiqh* studies. The method encourages students not only to understand religious texts passively but also to actively contextualize them with presentday issues. They are trained to explore different viewpoints, evaluate classical and contemporary arguments, and reconstruct them into logical, coherent, and academically sound responses. Discussions in *Bahtsul Masa'il* are dialogical and critical, allowing students to explore Islamic legal principles and weigh scholarly opinions comprehensively. Through this, students deepen their understanding of *fiqh* and sharpen analytical and evaluative

thinking. The activity also promotes openness to differing opinions and builds constructive argumentation skills.

Critical thinking in *Bahtsul Masa'il* can be observed when students effectively comprehend the problems being discussed and articulate well-supported responses using clear references. The selection of the most appropriate answer among several is based on relevance and consistency with the problem at hand. In *fiqh* classes at Pondok Pesantren An Najah Gondang (wustho level), the *Bahtsul Masa'il* method begins with formulating questions relevant to daily life. Students are then evenly divided into small groups where they exchange ideas, present arguments, and collaboratively seek solutions. Each group typically consists of two students, and four such groups compete in the forum. To cultivate critical thinking, several stages are emphasized: clarification, interpretation, evaluation, inference, analysis, and justification.

The first stage is interpretation an essential step in understanding and framing the issue to be discussed. At the start of the session, the moderator presents the issue. If the problem is unclear, a knowledgeable source explains it in detail. Once the problem is understood, participants respond using references from respected Islamic jurisprudential texts. Interpretation involves contextualizing classical texts and relating them to contemporary issues.

Interpretation is enriched through discussion, where participants support, critique, or challenge viewpoints using strong arguments. This deepens the participants' understanding and interpretation. Three methods are often used to strengthen arguments:

- a. *Qauli* – Direct citation from authoritative texts.
- b. *Ilhaqi* – Drawing analogies with previously established rulings.
- c. *Manhaji* – Considering public benefit and Islamic legal principles.

These methods form the basis of legal reasoning in *Bahtsul Masa'il*. After the discussion, the moderator and reviewers analyze and synthesize the most robust interpretations, which are then validated by a panel.

In the clarification stage, students are guided to present arguments with clarity and solid foundations. They search for references from their study materials, while moderators encourage deeper understanding before responding. Analogies may be used to clarify the issue further. Each group presents first, while others research. When one group presents, others respond with support or counterarguments. This interactive process, grounded in classical traditions and modern critical thinking strategies, strengthens the students' intellectual and personal growth, ensuring they are well-prepared to tackle real-world challenges through informed and reflective decision-making.

The analysis stage in *Bahtsul Masa'il* is a critical and systematic process of examining Islamic legal issues using various methodological approaches. This stage lies at the heart of legal decisionmaking within the *Bahtsul Masa'il* forum. The initial step involves analyzing the raised issue from multiple angles economic, social, cultural, political, and community contexts. This ensures that the understanding of the problem is not merely textual but also contextual, allowing for decisions that are relevant and applicable to the needs of the people. Once the issue is fully understood, participants proceed to analyze the potential impacts of applying a certain ruling, considering both its positive and negative outcomes. This type of analysis is essential for assessing the benefits and risks of a legal decision, ensuring that it is not only jurisprudentially correct but also beneficial to the community. This process includes interpretation (*ta'bir*), argumentative debates, and critical evaluations of existing opinions. Analysis is conducted collectively through dialogue and debate, where participants evaluate arguments from various perspectives, test their validity, and critique them to find the most suitable solution. This process trains students to think critically and analytically, especially when addressing contemporary *fiqh* issues.

After a comprehensive analysis, the drafting team formulates a conclusion based on the collective discussions. This conclusion is then reviewed and approved by the

council of *mushohih* as the official decision of the *Bahtsul Masa'il* forum. In a research context, the data analysis methods include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, which help systematically process the results of the *Bahtsul Masa'il* discussions. Justification in *Bahtsul Masa'il* involves not only quoting religious texts but also presenting critical analysis and scholarly arguments that connect these references with the current issue. Participants must clearly explain why a certain opinion is more appropriate and aligned with both Sharia principles and the social context. The team that formulates the problem is responsible for gathering, researching, and compiling a comprehensive justification based on the broader discussion. This justification is then reviewed and approved by the *mushohih* to ensure its validity and compliance with Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah principles.

Once validated, the justification is systematically documented as an official *Bahtsul Masa'il* ruling, which can then serve as a legal reference and guideline for the broader community. If the issue remains unclear, the moderator will invite subject matter experts (e.g., in economics, health, or other fields) to clarify the problem, helping all participants understand the context more fully. After clarification, participants seek answers in the canonical *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts), providing interpretations (*ta'bir*) aligned with relevant Islamic legal principles. Once all responses are reviewed for accuracy and consistency, the moderator leads the discussion toward a consensus. If clarity is not achieved, the drafting team identifies which answers require refinement or selection based on the strongest references. In unresolved cases, the issue is referred back to the *mushohih*. If the classical texts do not provide a clear answer, the forum resorts to *ilhaq* (analogical reasoning) or *ijtihad jama'i* (collective reasoning) to find new solutions in line with Sharia.

Unclear issues in *Bahtsul Masa'il* are resolved through interactive dialogue that includes expert explanation, participant Q&A, detailed problem framing, referencebased answers from *mu'tabarah* texts, argumentative debates, and collective conclusions. If necessary, analogical reasoning or collective *ijtihad* is applied. All final decisions are validated by the *mushohih* to ensure their legitimacy and accuracy. This process helps sharpen participants' critical and analytical thinking. Justification in this stage ensures that *Bahtsul Masa'il* rulings are not only valid according to Sharia but also scholarly, applicable, and collectively endorsed.

The inference stage in the *Bahtsul Masa'il* method involves drawing logical conclusions based on systematic procedures and the *istinbath* (derivation of law) methodologies applied in the forum. It begins with a clear and detailed description of the issue to be discussed, often involving experts to clarify any technical aspects so that all participants understand the full context. Data is gathered from primary sources primarily classical jurisprudential texts (*turats*) and contemporary literature. These include the Qur'an, Hadith, and authoritative opinions from the four recognized Sunni schools of thought (*madhhab*). Participants examine these sources deeply to identify relevant arguments. The moderator summarizes the discussion outcomes, while participants provide supporting or opposing views grounded in strong references.

Once discussions conclude, the drafting team synthesizes the various arguments and views into a coherent legal conclusion that best fits the chosen *madhhab*. This conclusion is submitted to the *mushohih* for validation to ensure it is sound both academically and theologically. This stage demands that participants think critically, analyze texts deeply, and apply analogical and methodological reasoning to reach practical legal solutions suitable for everyday life.

The final stage of *Bahtsul Masa'il* is evaluation. At this stage, the *mushohih* council presents their assessment of the discussion and compares it to regular *fiqh* lessons taught during *madrasah diniyah* sessions. Once the discussion and *Bahtsul Masa'il* session conclude, a reflective review is conducted to measure how well students understood the

content and how effective the method was in fostering their critical thinking. The *mushohih* assess the students' abilities in explaining the subject matter, forming arguments, and actively participating in the discussions. The evaluation covers their critical thinking and overall contribution to the forum.

This evaluation uses observation and questionnaires to measure students' engagement and critical thinking throughout the process. The collected data is analyzed both descriptively and statistically to assess the method's effectiveness. Results are compared to determine changes in students' critical thinking skills before and after the *Bahtsul Masa'il* method was applied. If a significant improvement is found, the method is deemed effective. Teachers and curriculum developers then use the findings to improve or further develop the *Bahtsul Masa'il* method, ensuring it remains a powerful tool for both *fiqh* instruction and the cultivation of critical thinking.

This forum also facilitates the connection between Islamic theoretical knowledge and current social realities, making religious discussions more relevant to contemporary needs. More than that, *Bahtsul Masa'il* cultivates independence in expressing opinions and fosters a sense of academic responsibility among participants. The decisions produced through this process carry strong collective weight, as they are the result of deliberation among qualified experts. However, *Bahtsul Masa'il* also faces several challenges that should be addressed. One of the main issues is the high demand for Arabic language proficiency and deep comprehension of classical Islamic texts, which not all participants possess. The lengthy discussions often create time management difficulties, potentially affecting the forum's overall effectiveness. Furthermore, the success of *Bahtsul Masa'il* heavily relies on the skills of the moderator and the formulation team in maintaining focus and guiding the flow of discussion. This dependence can become a limitation if competent figures are not available. Another important concern is the limited availability of reference materials, especially on contemporary issues, which often leaves new and emerging problems inadequately addressed.

Given both its strengths and shortcomings, *Bahtsul Masa'il* deserves further evaluation to enhance its function as an active learning platform that fosters critical thinking among students in Islamic boarding schools. Its effectiveness can be seen when students engage with the wider community, becoming knowledgeable, openminded, and religiously grounded young leaders.

4. Relevance of Bahtsul Masa'il to Contemporary Islamic Thought

The *Bahtsul Masa'il* forum serves as a dynamic space that bridges classical Islamic theories with realworld contemporary issues. This connection allows religious discourse to remain relevant and responsive to societal developments. Moreover, it fosters independence in reasoning and instills a sense of scholarly responsibility among its participants. The collective nature of its decisionmaking processemerging from discussions among competent scholarsalso grants these decisions a strong sense of legitimacy and authority. Despite its many benefits, *Bahtsul Masa'il* faces several challenges. A significant internal obstacle is the demanding requirement for fluency in Arabic and comprehension of classical texts, which not all students possess. Long and unfocused discussions often lead to time management issues that reduce the forum's effectiveness. Additionally, the success of the forum is highly dependent on the capabilities of the moderator and the formulation team. If these roles are filled by individuals lacking leadership or experience, the discussions can easily go offtrack.

Another recurring issue is the lack of adequate resourcesespecially concerning contemporary issues that are not yet addressed in classical textsmaking it difficult to find proper legal references. Limited access to funding, reference materials, and appropriate facilities further hinders the forum's potential.

Challenges in *Bahtsul Masa'il* are categorized into internal and external factors. Internally, students face:

- a. Limited academic comprehension, particularly in interpreting *turats* (classical texts) and understanding the methods of *ijtihad*.
- b. Lack of discipline, including tardiness, unpreparedness, and failure to follow discussion rules.
- c. Low selfconfidence, which hinders participation.
- d. Poor debating ethics, such as intolerance to criticism or interrupting others.
- e. Weak forum management, especially when moderators are unable to keep discussions focused.

Externally, the forum is affected by:

- a. Inadequate facilities, such as overcrowded spaces and lack of access to relevant reference books.
- b. Limited funding, which affects logistics and materials.
- c. Time constraints for participants juggling other responsibilities.
- d. The fast pace of societal changes, which the forum sometimes cannot respond to quickly.
- e. External pressure or intervention, including political or ideological influence, which threatens the forum's neutrality.

Specific challenges also arise depending on the role of each stakeholder.

- a. Mushohihis are tasked with verifying the validity and accuracy of all conclusions. They must guide the forum within the framework of *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah*, requiring strong communication skills, deep knowledge, and the ability to provide constructive criticism.
- b. Moderators hold the central role of managing discussions. They are responsible for balancing participation, ensuring time discipline, and guiding debates with scholarly objectivity. They must evaluate the strength of arguments and references without bias.
- c. Participants or students face challenges such as low confidence, limited ability or interest in reading classical Arabic texts, different levels of understanding, frequent lateness, dominance by certain individuals, lack of opportunity to speak, and insufficient references. Long discussions due to differing opinions also often delay conclusions.

To address these challenges, several strategies are recommended:

- a. Preforum training in classical text interpretation, *ijtihad* methodology, and discussion skills.
- b. Groupbased learning that mixes experienced and beginner participants for peer support.
- c. Improved access to resources, including the provision of key reference books and a dedicated minilibrary.
- d. Clear time management rules, enforced by strong moderators to ensure discussions remain ontopic.
- e. Fostering respectful discussion culture, encouraging participants to focus on knowledge over ego, and to listen and engage with diverse viewpoints.

Santri (students) should also be encouraged to engage with realworld issues beyond the pesantren. This includes examining contemporary social challenges with depth and insight. By doing so, they will not only deepen their understanding of common religious topics but also develop the critical capacity to respond to modern societal needs. One of the supporting factors of successful *Bahtsul Masa'il* implementation is students' habit of preparing material in advance. The availability of translated versions of classical texts published by pesantren also aids comprehension. However, common obstacles include poor time discipline, fatigue during long sessions, and decreased concentration. In these moments, the moderator plays a vit

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