

Effective Curriculum Management in Islamic Primary Education: A Case Study of Integrated Islamic Schools

Nurfaisal Nurfaisal¹, Sunengko Sunengko², M. Fadhly Farhy Abbas³

¹ Universitas Lancang Kuning, Pekanbaru, Indonesia; nurfaisal@unilak.ac.id

² Universitas Lancang Kuning, Pekanbaru, Indonesia; sunengko@unilak.ac.id

³ Universitas Lancang Kuning, Pekanbaru, Indonesia; fadhly@unilak.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates curriculum management at SDIT Fadhilah, an Integrated Islamic School in Pekanbaru, Indonesia. The focus lies on balancing national academic standards and Islamic educational values, a key issue in contemporary Islamic education. The aim is to explore how the school integrates these dual priorities to foster academic and spiritual development. A qualitative case study approach was employed, collecting data through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The research addressed How SDIT Fadhilah implements, organizes, and evaluates an integrated curriculum to achieve its dual educational goals. Findings indicate that SDIT Fadhilah effectively integrates academic and religious education. However, significant challenges include inadequate instructional time for covering both curricula and the lack of standardized tools for assessing students' spiritual development. These issues hinder the coherence and quality of the integrated curriculum. To mitigate these challenges, the study recommends structured scheduling strategies, such as block scheduling or thematic units, to optimize instructional time. Additionally, it suggests developing standardized assessment tools, such as rubrics for character development and self-assessment journals for spiritual reflection, to ensure consistency in evaluating students' progress. These findings have broader implications for other Integrated Islamic Schools, underscoring the importance of strategic time management and assessment standardization in achieving holistic educational outcomes. Future research should conduct comparative studies across various schools to examine the broader applicability and long-term effects of these strategies, aiming to enhance curriculum management in Islamic education contexts.

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Corresponding Author:

Nurfaisal Nurfaisal

Pascasarjana, Universitas Lancang Kuning, Pekanbaru, Indonesia; nurfaisal@unilak.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Integrated Islamic Schools (Sekolah Islam Terpadu, SIT) in Indonesia present a unique educational paradigm by combining national academic standards with Islamic values within a single curriculum. This dual focus fosters a comprehensive environment where academic excellence intertwines with moral and

spiritual development, presenting significant challenges for curriculum management. The establishment of the Integrated Islamic School Network (Jaringan Sekolah Islam Terpadu, JSIT) in 1993 aimed to address these challenges, offering a structured approach to integrate modern education with Islamic principles while aligning with the cultural and spiritual needs of the Muslim community. Over the decades, JSIT has expanded to nearly 2,000 schools nationwide, becoming a significant model for holistic education that merges general and religious instruction. This study examines the intricate process of curriculum management in SITs, emphasizing the strategies employed to balance national educational mandates with Islamic values, ensuring coherence and avoiding potential conflicts in their implementation.

In the context of integrated curriculum management, integrated education management theory as proposed by Al-Attas (1999) and Al-Ghazali provides a relevant framework. Al-Attas emphasized the importance of integrating worldly and everyday knowledge, underlining that Islamic education must cover intellectual and spiritual aspects holistically. Apart from that, the Islamic pedagogical approach according to Sahin (2017) emphasizes the need for a curriculum that not only educates students cognitively but also builds morals and faith as the core of learning. These frameworks are relevant to overcome the dual curriculum challenges facing SITs, such as the integration of Islamic values in general subjects without reducing academic depth.

Education is widely regarded as a pillar of human resource development and, by extension, national progress (Tilaar, 2012). In Indonesia, education is not merely about academic achievement but also encompasses character and spiritual development, especially within the framework of Islamic schools like SITs. The vision outlined in Indonesia's National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 emphasizes the formation of students who are pious, moral, knowledgeable, creative, and responsible citizens. Achieving these ideals demands a robust educational system that promotes cognitive and character growth. However, realizing this vision remains a challenge, as Indonesia's educational quality at primary and secondary levels continues to face several issues, with disparities in resource distribution, quality of teaching, and access to facilities. These systemic challenges have prompted various efforts to improve and reform the education system to meet both national and global standards.

Globalization has further complicated the landscape of Islamic education, especially for SITs. The rapid spread of secular ideologies, along with the influence of global media and technology, has created new pressures that impact students' moral and cultural values (Muslimin et al., 2021). For Islamic education in Indonesia, such as in SITs, this challenge is particularly pronounced, as these schools strive to preserve traditional values in an environment increasingly shaped by global secular influences. As Sabtina (2023) observed, the adverse effects of globalization on education include social stratification, weakened state control over educational quality, and an erosion of local culture. These forces can disrupt the moral fabric of Indonesian education, prompting SITs to respond with a model that emphasizes religious values alongside national academic standards.

The concept of SITs was developed as a response to these global and local pressures. By integrating religious education with general subjects within a single curriculum, SITs aim to produce students who are intellectually capable and spiritually grounded. Parents and communities have increasingly embraced this approach, recognizing its potential to nurture children in a balanced environment that meets both their academic and religious needs. The growth of SITs reflects a broader societal shift toward educational models that counter secularization and globalization's impact on culture and religion. SITs offer a compelling alternative to conventional schooling by integrating Islamic teachings with modern pedagogical practices, addressing both cognitive and spiritual development (Safitri, 2018; Milal et al., 2020).

However, the SIT model also introduces significant complexities in curriculum management. Integrating national and Islamic curricula requires careful planning, organization, and implementation. The dual objectives of SITs necessitate a comprehensive approach to curriculum management, where educators and administrators align school activities and instructional goals with both national standards and Islamic values. This integration can create challenges in scheduling, as educators must fit additional religious studies into the school day, often leading to time constraints and potential conflicts with general

education. Assessment tools pose another challenge, as they may not fully capture the dual goals of academic rigor and religious character formation. For SITs, curriculum management is crucial to prevent overlap or contradictions between secular and religious content, ensuring that students meet both academic requirements and religious standards (Arifin, 2018).

Prior research has identified several factors critical to effective curriculum implementation in Islamic schools, including leadership and alignment with curriculum objectives. For example, Ginanjar et al. (2022) found that strong leadership and managerial competencies among school principals are essential in promoting positive educational outcomes. Similarly, Zaini et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of aligning school activities with the curriculum to optimize learning outcomes. However, these studies primarily address general Islamic schools and do not focus specifically on the distinctive challenges faced by SITs. Few studies have investigated how SITs navigate the particular demands of managing a dual curriculum one that balances national and Islamic educational standards in a way that allows both sets of goals to be met effectively. Similar research conducted by Milal et al. (2020) at SIT in Malang showed that using an integrated character-based learning approach in a dual curriculum increased students' understanding of general subjects while strengthening their spiritual values. This study highlights the importance of flexible curriculum design, allowing teachers to utilize Islamic values in teaching science and mathematics. These findings provide a relevant basis for comparing the approach implemented at SDIT Fadhilah with other SITs.

Apart from that, Zaini et al. (2022), in their research in Kalimantan, emphasize the importance of providing special curriculum management training for SIT teachers. This training includes strategies for efficiently integrating Islamic values with national academic standards. This is relevant for SDIT Fadhilah because the lack of teacher training is also a major obstacle in implementing the dual curriculum. This gap in the literature underscores the need for research that examines the complexities of curriculum management within SITs, identifying both obstacles and strategies for successful integration.

Existing solutions proposed in previous research have primarily centered on strengthening leadership and improving curriculum planning, but these measures alone may not fully address the unique challenges encountered in SIT settings. The demands of SIT curriculum management extend beyond traditional leadership models, requiring innovative approaches to handle the complexities inherent in a curriculum that incorporates both religious and academic education. For instance, school leaders and educators must not only maintain compliance with national standards but also ensure that Islamic values are effectively interwoven into everyday school operations. This balancing act involves detailed attention to curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation, which must all align with the dual objectives of SITs to ensure holistic student development.

This study seeks to fill the gap by examining curriculum management at SDIT Fadhilah, an Integrated Islamic School in Pekanbaru. As one of the many SITs that have emerged across Indonesia, SDIT Fadhilah provides a relevant case study to explore how SITs manage the integration of Islamic values with national education standards. Despite the rapid expansion of SITs, many schools still struggle with effective implementation of an integrated curriculum. Factors such as time constraints, resource limitations, and varying levels of teacher expertise can hinder the successful adoption of this dual curriculum model. Consequently, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the processes and practices involved in curriculum management within an SIT context.

Specifically, this research will focus on four key aspects of curriculum management at SDIT Fadhilah: planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum. Through an in-depth analysis of these processes, the study seeks to identify the primary challenges and best practices in managing a dual curriculum within an Islamic educational framework. Additionally, the study will examine the factors that support or hinder successful implementation, such as administrative support, teacher training, and availability of resources (Memon et al., 2021). This investigation will offer valuable insights into how SITs can overcome obstacles to effectively balance their academic and religious missions.

In summary, the objectives of this research are to examine how SDIT Fadhilah plans and organizes its curriculum to accommodate both national and Islamic educational objectives, assess the

implementation of the integrated curriculum, and evaluate the outcomes of this dual curriculum in practice. By addressing these questions, this study contributes to the broader discourse on curriculum management in Islamic schools and provides practical recommendations for improving the quality of education in Integrated Islamic Schools across Indonesia. The findings aim to offer guidance to SIT administrators, educators, and policymakers on enhancing curriculum management to better serve students in a way that aligns with both national and religious ideals (Efendi, 2022).

By focusing on the management of an integrated curriculum, this study addresses a pressing issue for SITs, which play a vital role in providing quality education grounded in Islamic values while meeting national standards. The research outcomes are expected to support SITs across Indonesia in developing a more efficient curriculum management model, enabling these institutions to better navigate the complexities of dual educational goals.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach, specifically a case study design, to provide an in-depth examination of curriculum management practices at SDIT Fadhilah in Pekanbaru. The qualitative case study method is ideal for this research as it enables a thorough investigation of curriculum integration processes in a real-world school setting, which is critical for understanding the complexities of balancing national and Islamic curricular demands within Integrated Islamic Schools (Yin, 2018).

2.1 School Characteristics and Sampling Criteria

SDIT Fadhilah, established in 2010, is an Integrated Islamic School in Pekanbaru with a strong reputation for implementing both the national and Islamic curricula. The school operates as a full-day institution, reinforcing Islamic values throughout its educational practices, and has achieved an A accreditation from BAN-PT in 2017. The school serves approximately 760 students, supported by a team of 31 teachers and four staff members, with facilities that include a library, computer lab, and adequate classroom space, fostering an environment conducive to holistic learning.

To gather comprehensive insights, this study targeted key stakeholders directly involved in curriculum management. Primary participants included the school principal, vice principal, curriculum coordinator, and teachers responsible for curriculum planning and implementation. Support staff and parents also participated to provide additional perspectives on the curriculum's application and challenges. Participants were selected based on their roles in managing and executing the integrated curriculum, ensuring that the data collected reflected diverse viewpoints across different levels of curriculum management.

2.2 Data Collection

Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, structured observations, and document analysis to ensure a multi-faceted understanding of curriculum management. A total of eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with school leaders and teachers, including the principal, curriculum coordinator, and teachers from different grade levels. Questions were designed to elicit detailed insights into the strategies and challenges of integrating Islamic and national curricula, focusing on planning, organization, and evaluation practices. Selecting these stakeholders allowed the researcher to explore varied perspectives on curriculum implementation and gather firsthand accounts of their experiences in managing this dual curriculum (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Observations were conducted over approximately 30 hours, covering both classroom settings and general school activities. Specific classes observed included Islamic studies, general subjects, and extracurricular activities that reflect the dual curriculum's application. A structured observation protocol was used to document teaching methods, student engagement, and the practical integration of Islamic values in academic instruction. This direct observation provided real-time insights into how the integrated curriculum was being applied and highlighted potential challenges, such as time constraints and resource availability.

Relevant documents, including curriculum plans, lesson plans (RPP), syllabus, evaluation reports, and records of school programs, were analyzed. The documents were chosen based on their relevance to curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation stages, as well as their role in illustrating how national and Islamic educational standards are integrated at SDIT Fadhilah. The document analysis helped to triangulate data from interviews and observations, offering concrete evidence of curriculum strategies and management practices (Patton, 2015).

2.3 Researcher's Role and Bias Minimization

The researcher played an active role in data collection by being present in the field and engaging directly with participants. This involvement enabled a deeper contextual understanding of curriculum practices within SDIT Fadhilah's educational setting. To minimize potential biases, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal to document personal reflections and mitigate any subjective influences during data collection. This reflexivity was essential in maintaining objectivity and ensuring that findings were grounded in participants' authentic experiences rather than researcher interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

2.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2017) framework to identify recurring themes and patterns. The process began with open coding, followed by grouping related codes into categories corresponding to key curriculum management aspects such as planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. Themes were developed based on the categories, capturing both challenges and effective practices within the dual curriculum model.

The analysis involved multiple stages to ensure depth and reliability. The initial coding was revisited to refine categories, ensuring that themes accurately represented participants' perspectives and the curriculum management dynamics at SDIT Fadhilah. While no specific software was used, manual coding allowed for a closer engagement with the data, facilitating a nuanced interpretation of the curriculum practices observed.

2.5 Triangulation

To enhance the validity of findings, triangulation was applied by cross-referencing data from interviews, observations, and document analysis. For example, observations of classroom practices were compared with teachers' interview responses to identify consistencies and discrepancies in curriculum application. Additionally, document analysis provided context for strategies discussed in interviews, such as curriculum adaptation techniques, reinforcing the reliability of data and supporting the study's conclusions about the integration of national and Islamic curricula at SDIT Fadhilah (Denzin, 2017).

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Curriculum Planning

Based on interviews with the school principal and curriculum coordinator, the curriculum planning process at SDIT Fadhilah integrates national education standards with Islamic values, using a SWOT analysis framework to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This planning process involves examining both internal and external factors that could impact the curriculum's effectiveness. Teachers play an active role in designing lesson plans that incorporate Islamic and national educational goals, ensuring that academic subjects are balanced with spiritual teachings. Teacher involvement is prioritized, with annual workshops conducted to refine the curriculum based on feedback and evolving educational objectives (Fathurrahman et al., 2020).

Table 1. Key Elements of Curriculum Planning at SDIT Fadhilah

Element	Description
National Curriculum	Core subjects based on Indonesian government standards
Islamic Education	Integration of Islamic studies into the general curriculum
Teacher Involvement	Teachers collaborate in designing lesson plans
Parental Input	Parents provide feedback on the Islamic content

3.2 Implementation Challenges

One of the central challenges in implementing the integrated curriculum at SDIT Fadhilah is managing time to cover both national academic and religious content. Teachers reported difficulties balancing national standards with religious instruction, a struggle exacerbated by the limited instructional hours allocated. This often forces teachers to shorten lessons, compromising either the depth of academic subjects or the comprehensiveness of religious teachings. Apart from time management challenges, systemic obstacles, including teacher training, limited resources, and incompatibility with government policies, are the main obstacles to implementing the dual curriculum at SIT. Teachers at SIT often do not receive adequate training to integrate Islamic values in general subject learning, as found in Hassan and Syukri's (2021) research on curriculum management in integrated Islamic schools in Indonesia. Training focusing on thematic learning and integrating spiritual values is an urgent need, considering teachers often rely on personal experience without standardized guidance.

In addition, uneven resource allocation, such as limited access to teaching materials or modern facilities, exacerbates the challenges of implementing a dual curriculum. This is also reflected in Safitri's (2018) research, which shows that a lack of resource support hinders the development of a curriculum based on Islamic values. For example, some SITs address this problem by adopting a community-based approach to gain support from parents and the local community through donations and learning materials. The incompatibility of government policies is also a major challenge. National education policies often do not fully support the unique needs of SITs, such as recognizing the need for additional study hours for religious education. In response, some SITs have adapted internal policies that refer to the principles of Islamic education, although this often requires additional efforts on the part of the school. Observations further supported these concerns, revealing that teachers frequently have to make trade-offs between meeting academic targets and ensuring adequate religious education. As a result, maintaining a consistent depth of knowledge across subjects remains a challenge (Fatihin et al., 2023).

A study conducted by Hassan and Syukri (2021) regarding implementing the dual curriculum at SIT in East Java shows that the success of curriculum management is very dependent on adaptive school leadership and community support. The SIT integrates project-based learning activities to combine Islamic values with general subjects so that learning is more focused and efficient. This practice is relevant for SDIT Fadhilah because a thematic and project-based approach can be a solution to overcome time constraints and integrate learning material.

In addition, research conducted by Safitri (2018) on character development in faith-based schools in Yogyakarta highlights the importance of collaboration between teachers and parents. This study shows that parents' active involvement in evaluation helps create synergy between school and family values, strengthening the coherence of the dual curriculum. This practice can be applied at SDIT Fadhilah to increase the integration of Islamic values in students' lives at school and home.

For example, one teacher noted the need to prioritize core academic subjects during the national exam preparation periods, often at the expense of religious studies. These findings align with previous research indicating that balancing dual curricula is a persistent issue in integrated Islamic schools (Shafa, 2024).

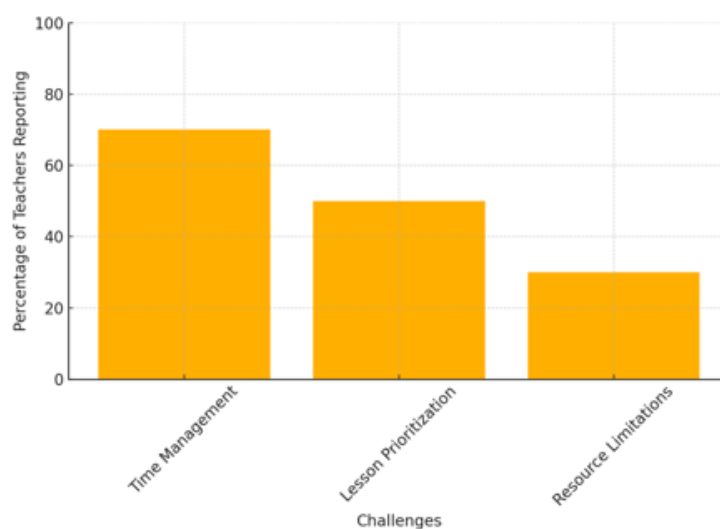


Figure 1. Implementation Challenges Faced by Teachers At SDIT

3.3 Evaluation Process

The evaluation process at SDIT Fadhilah uses both formal and informal assessments to gauge students' academic and religious progress. Formal assessments align with national standards, primarily focusing on academic subjects, while informal evaluations address students' spiritual development. However, the curriculum coordinator identified a gap: the absence of standardized assessment tools for religious education, which results in inconsistent evaluations across different classes. Teachers provide feedback on both academic and spiritual growth at the end of each term, but the lack of uniform assessment criteria for religious education remains a notable limitation (Ayuningsih, 2020).

Table 2. Evaluation Methods at SDIT Fadhilah

Type of Assessment	Focus	Issues
Formal Assessment	Academic Subjects	Aligned with national standards but may overlook spiritual aspects
Informal Assessment	Religious Development	Lack of standardized tools, inconsistent evaluations

3.4 Best Practices

SDIT Fadhilah has implemented several effective strategies to manage its integrated curriculum. First, teacher collaboration is highly encouraged, with regular meetings held to discuss curriculum challenges and share teaching strategies. These meetings foster a sense of community among educators, enhancing their ability to balance national and Islamic educational goals effectively. Additionally, the school provides ongoing professional development to support teachers in handling the complexities of a dual curriculum. Parental involvement also plays a key role; SDIT Fadhilah engages parents in the curriculum evaluation process to align Islamic education with community expectations. This collaboration strengthens trust and helps create a supportive environment conducive to students' holistic growth (Safitri, 2018; Milal et al., 2020).

Discussion

Time Management in Dual Curricula

Time management emerges as a critical challenge for dual-curriculum schools like SDIT Fadhilah, where teachers must balance comprehensive national academic standards with rigorous religious instruction. The limited instructional hours force compromises, often leading to either a reduction in the depth of academic content or insufficient coverage of religious teachings. This dichotomy underscores a structural inefficiency that threatens the coherence and effectiveness of the dual curriculum. Research suggests that integrating overlapping themes through project-based and thematic instruction can optimize teaching time while enhancing student engagement. Such methods allow for simultaneous coverage of academic and religious content, promoting efficiency without sacrificing quality (Hassan & Syukri, 2021).

Islamic educational philosophy, exemplified by Al-Ghazali, emphasizes thematic learning as a means to naturally weave spiritual values into general education. This approach not only optimizes instructional time but also reinforces the interconnectedness of knowledge, which is central to Islamic education. Furthermore, implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) principles in curriculum management can ensure alignment between planning, execution, and evaluation phases. Adjusting daily schedules to include flexible instructional blocks dedicated to integrated learning is another practical solution that SDIT Fadhilah could adopt to address these time constraints effectively (Mulyasa, 2011).

Standardization in Religious Assessment

The absence of standardized assessment tools for religious education at SDIT Fadhilah poses a significant challenge, resulting in inconsistent evaluations of students' spiritual development. Informal assessments, while valuable, lack the comparability and reliability necessary for comprehensive curriculum evaluation. Adopting a standardized framework, such as rubrics or reflective journals proposed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, would enable a more consistent and accurate measurement of spiritual growth. This approach ensures that spiritual education is evaluated with the same rigor as academic subjects, fostering a balanced development of students (Patton, 2015).

Role of Teacher and Parental Involvement

Teacher collaboration and parental involvement are vital to overcoming the complexities of dual-curriculum management. Regular discussions among teachers enable the sharing of best practices, fostering a unified approach to balancing academic and religious instruction. Similarly, engaging parents in curriculum evaluation ensures alignment between school and community values, strengthening the coherence of educational goals. This collaborative model aligns with findings by Ginanjar et al. (2022), which highlight the critical role of stakeholders in supporting integrated curricula. At SDIT Fadhilah, these practices not only enhance curriculum implementation but also build trust and a sense of shared responsibility among educators and families.

Broader Implications

The challenges faced by SDIT Fadhilah reflect systemic issues in the broader context of integrated Islamic schools across Indonesia. These challenges, including time management, resource limitations, and policy misalignment, call for structural reforms at the national level. Policymakers should consider extending instructional hours, revising curriculum mandates to accommodate the unique needs of dual-curriculum schools, and providing targeted resources to support their goals. Additionally, national guidelines for dual-curriculum management, informed by successful practices such as those at SDIT Fadhilah, could enhance educational quality across similar institutions (Denzin, 2017). These measures would not only address the immediate challenges but also position integrated Islamic schools as models for holistic education that balances academic and spiritual excellence.

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated curriculum management at SDIT Fadhilah, focusing on the integration of national education standards and Islamic values. The findings reveal key challenges, including time management, where limited instructional hours force compromises between academic and religious content, and inconsistencies in evaluating students' spiritual development due to a lack of standardized assessment tools. These challenges highlight the need for strategic solutions, such as thematic or block scheduling to optimize instructional time and the adoption of standardized frameworks for evaluating spiritual growth. The implications of this research extend to other Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT) across Indonesia, where similar dual-curriculum challenges are likely prevalent. Addressing these systemic issues requires competency-based teacher training, national curriculum guidelines for SITs, and enhanced resource allocation. Policy reforms, such as adjustments to study hours and increased collaboration between schools, communities, and policymakers, could significantly support the effective implementation of dual curricula. However, as this study is limited to a single case, its generalizability is constrained. Future research should expand to multiple schools to identify broader patterns and evaluate the long-term impacts of curriculum management strategies. Comparative and longitudinal studies would further enrich understanding and contribute to the development of practical solutions for balancing academic and spiritual education in Integrated Islamic Schools.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the research titled "Effective Curriculum Management in Integrated Islamic Schools: A Case Study of SDIT Fadhilah." There are no personal circumstances or interests that could be perceived as inappropriately influencing the representation or interpretation of the reported research results.

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