



Integrating 21st-Century Learning Skills into Multiple Intelligences-Based Islamic Religious Education

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A B S T R A C T

The growing emphasis on 21st-century learning challenges Islamic Religious Education (IRE) to recognize and develop students' diverse abilities beyond conventional academic achievement. Although previous studies have examined Multiple Intelligences and 21st-century competencies, limited attention has been given to how teachers facilitate the development of diverse student potential into contemporary learning competencies within Islamic boarding schools. This study aims to examine how Multiple Intelligences-oriented IRE supports the development of 21st-century competencies and to explore the role of teachers in facilitating this process. A qualitative multi-site study was conducted at BIN BAZ Islamic Boarding School and Jamillurrahman Islamic Boarding School, Yogyakarta, involving 12 participants consisting of IRE teachers and students. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis, and were analyzed through thematic coding, categorization, interpretation, and cross-site comparison. The findings indicate that students' potential is multidimensional and cannot be adequately represented by academic achievement alone. Students demonstrated diverse strengths in Qur'anic memorization, communication, creativity, participation, collaboration, confidence, leadership, and responsibility. These abilities were observed to be associated with varied learning opportunities, teacher guidance, peer interaction, repeated practice, and student involvement in classroom, religious, and extracurricular activities. From these empirical patterns, the study reconstructs a four-stage qualitative pattern comprising recognition, activation, development, and transformation that illustrates how students' diverse potential aligns with meaningful 21st-century competencies. The study contributes empirical insight into how teacher mediated learning environments can connect diverse student potential with competency oriented Islamic education and provides practical implications for more inclusive and learner centred Islamic education.

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1. Introduction

The rapid transformation of education in the twenty-first century has challenged conventional understandings of student achievement and learning capacity. Academic performance can no longer be considered the sole representation of students' potential, particularly in educational environments characterized by diverse intellectual, social, emotional, creative, and religious capacities. Contemporary education increasingly emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, adaptability, and independent learning as essential competencies for responding to complex social and technological changes (Khoirunisa et al., 2026). Within Islamic education, however, the development of these competencies cannot be separated from moral formation, religious values, character development, and the ability to translate Islamic knowledge into everyday practice. This challenge is particularly significant in Islamic educational institutions, where academic learning, religious instruction, character formation, Qur'anic

learning, and social development occur within an interconnected educational environment. Consequently, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) requires pedagogical approaches that recognize students beyond conventional academic achievement and provide meaningful opportunities for diverse forms of potential to develop (Triansyah et al., 2023). The Multiple Intelligences perspective provides a relevant foundation for addressing this challenge by recognizing that students possess different combinations of linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic capacities. From this perspective, relatively modest performance in conventional academic assessments does not necessarily indicate limited intellectual potential, because students may demonstrate significant abilities through creativity, communication, social interaction, leadership, practical activities, memorization, self-awareness, or other forms of competence (Ahmad Asroni, 2025). To ensure conceptual clarity, this study analytically distinguishes among core constructs. "Diverse potential," "intelligence," and "strength" refer to students' underlying or emerging latent capacities across non-academic and religious domains, as viewed through Gardner's Multiple Intelligences perspective—not as fixed diagnostic classifications or formal psychometric types. In contrast, "ability" and "performance" describe observable participation in school and dormitory activities. Finally, "competence" and "competency" denote structured, higher-order 21st-century learning outcomes (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity) that students demonstrate when their latent potentials are pedagogically facilitated. In IRE, such diversity is particularly important because learning outcomes extend beyond cognitive mastery to include religious practice, social responsibility, character, and the internalization of Islamic values (Hanafi & Pohan, 2024).

Despite the growing recognition of both Multiple Intelligences and twenty-first-century learning competencies, the relationship between these two perspectives remains insufficiently developed in the literature, particularly within Islamic Religious Education (Purwanto et al., 2023). Previous studies have demonstrated the relevance of Multiple Intelligences for accommodating students' diverse characteristics and have examined its application in instructional planning, learning strategies, assessment, and student development. Similarly, research on twenty-first-century education has emphasized the importance of critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and independent learning in preparing students for contemporary social and technological environments (Lubbe et al., 2025; Ponce Rojo et al., 2025; Walter, 2024). However, these two areas of scholarship have often developed along relatively separate trajectories: Multiple Intelligences research tends to concentrate on identifying and accommodating diverse forms of intelligence, whereas twenty-first-century learning research generally focuses on developing competencies required in contemporary society (Juliantika et al., 2024). Specifically, while MI studies demonstrate how diverse abilities improve engagement, they treat MI primarily as an accommodation tool rather than a mechanism for developing higher-order competencies; conversely, 21st-century skill research assumes a standardized learner profile without comparing how varied intelligence profiles condition skill acquisition. Conceptually, this study integrates four complementary frameworks to examine this educational problem: Gardner's Multiple Intelligences serves as the diagnostic lens to recognize diverse student potential beyond standardized academics; Vygotsky's sociocultural theory accounts for the social mediation and teacher-guided scaffolding

required to activate these potentials; Bandura's social learning theory explains how teacher modeling, reinforcement, and peer interaction foster self-efficacy; and the 21st-century skills framework (4Cs) defines the intended competency outcomes. Rather than operating in isolation, these theoretical perspectives collectively frame how latent learner diversity is socially mediated toward contemporary skill expression.

A further limitation concerns the empirical context in which these perspectives have been examined. Existing studies have frequently focused on individual institutional settings or presented general pedagogical frameworks, leaving limited empirical evidence regarding how teachers in Islamic boarding schools and madrasah recognize students whose strengths may not be adequately represented by conventional academic indicators and how such strengths can be connected with broader twenty-first-century competencies (Ramadhoni & Ali, 2026; Tan, 2021). The critical scholarly gap, therefore, is not merely empirical but explanatory: existing literature fails to explain the operational mechanics of teacher pedagogical mediation—specifically how teachers systematically convert unstandardized student potentials (such as *tahfiz* memorization or dormitory leadership) into verifiable 4C competencies. This gap is particularly important in Islamic educational contexts where Qur'anic memorization, religious practice, academic learning, character formation, and social interaction are integrated within students' everyday educational experiences (Ramadhoni & Ali, 2026). The critical scholarly gap, therefore, is not merely empirical but explanatory existing literature fails to explain the operational mechanics of teacher pedagogical mediation specifically how teachers systematically convert unstandardized student potentials (such as *tahfiz* memorization or dormitory leadership) into verifiable 4C competencies. By examining these dimensions across BIN BAZ Islamic Boarding School and Jamillurrahman Islamic Junior High School in Yogyakarta, the study seeks to extend previous research from the identification of diverse abilities toward a more contextual understanding of how those abilities are pedagogically developed and connected with contemporary educational competencies

Thus, further empirical investigation is needed to understand not only whether Multiple Intelligences is relevant to IRE, but also how its pedagogical application can facilitate the development of competencies required for contemporary learning (Fithrah Syauqi Abdullah et al., 2025).

The need to investigate this relationship also requires a critical reconsideration of how student potential and teacher roles are understood in Islamic education. Although previous research has established the educational value of recognizing diverse intelligences, identifying students' strengths alone does not automatically transform those strengths into meaningful learning competencies. The pedagogical process requires teachers to create learning opportunities, provide encouragement, facilitate participation, offer appropriate guidance, and connect students' existing capacities with challenging and meaningful learning experiences (Munawir & Sahrir, 2025). In this regard, teachers function not merely as transmitters of religious knowledge but also as facilitators, mentors, motivators, and role models whose pedagogical agency can influence how students' diverse abilities are recognized and developed (Hayi et al., 2025). Previous scholarship has also suggested the importance of integrating Multiple Intelligences into Islamic education through varied learning experiences, including discussion, storytelling, collaborative activities, reflection, practical religious activities, visual representation, and creative projects (Muhamad Parhan

et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the existing literature provides limited explanation of the mechanisms through which teachers mediate the relationship between diverse student intelligences and twenty-first-century competencies within authentic Islamic educational settings. The present study is therefore positioned at the intersection of three dimensions that have not been sufficiently examined together: students' diverse forms of intelligence, teachers' pedagogical mediation, and the development of twenty-first-century learning skills in Islamic Religious Education. By examining these dimensions across BIN BAZ Islamic Boarding School and Jamillurrahman Islamic Junior High School in Yogyakarta, the study seeks to extend previous research from the identification of diverse abilities toward a more contextual understanding of how those abilities are pedagogically developed and connected with contemporary educational competencies. Rather than relying solely on the institutional uniqueness of these two sites, this study establishes its novelty by proposing a conceptual four-stage analytical framework Recognition, Activation, Development, and Transformation (RADT) to explain how teacher mediation serves as an active transformational bridge converting raw potentials into modern competence. It should be emphasized that the proposed four-stage framework Recognition, Activation, Development, and Transformation (RADT) functions as an interpretive and context-dependent analytical tool rather than a rigid, linear, or universal developmental sequence.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine how twenty-first-century learning skills are integrated into Multiple Intelligences-based Islamic Religious Education across two Islamic educational institutions in Yogyakarta, with particular attention to the role of teachers in recognizing and developing students' diverse potentials. The study addresses three central questions: (1) What forms of diverse intelligence and learning potential are identified among students in the two Islamic educational settings? (2) How do teachers facilitate the development of these diverse potentials into twenty-first-century learning competencies? and (3) How do institutional and pedagogical contexts shape the integration of Multiple Intelligences and twenty-first-century skills in Islamic Religious Education? Through a multi-site qualitative investigation, this study positions Multiple Intelligences not simply as a framework for classifying students' abilities, but as a pedagogical perspective for understanding how learner diversity can be connected with creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, and independent learning. The central argument of this study is that the educational value of diverse intelligences depends not merely on their recognition, but on the pedagogical conditions through which teachers provide opportunities, guidance, and meaningful learning experiences that enable those potentials to develop into relevant intellectual, social, creative, and moral competencies.

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative multi-site research design to examine how twenty-first-century learning skills are integrated into Multiple Intelligences-based Islamic Religious Education (IRE). A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on understanding educational practices, teacher-mediated learning processes, student experiences, and the meanings attached to diverse student potentials within their natural educational contexts rather than measuring competencies quantitatively (Al-Baihaqi et al., 2024; Hilalludin, 2025; Kristina, 2024). The study specifically examined how teachers

recognize, facilitate, and develop students' diverse potentials through IRE learning activities and how these processes relate to the development of twenty-first-century learning competencies. The fieldwork was conducted from January to March 2026 at two Islamic educational institutions in Yogyakarta. The multi-site design enabled the researchers to examine patterns within each educational setting and subsequently compare similarities and differences across the two sites.

2.2 Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at BIN BAZ Islamic Boarding School and Jamillurrahman Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta. These settings were selected because they provide educational environments in which Islamic Religious Education, religious learning, student development, and various classroom and extracurricular activities occur within an interconnected educational context. The study involved 12 participants, consisting of six participants from each research site. At each site, the participants comprised three IRE teachers and three students. The teachers were selected because of their direct involvement in planning, implementing, facilitating, and evaluating Islamic Religious Education learning. The students were included to provide first-hand accounts of their learning experiences, participation, perceived strengths, teacher support, peer interaction, and opportunities to express and develop their abilities.

2.3 Sampling Procedures

Participants were selected using purposive sampling. The selection was based on their relevance to the research objectives and their direct experience with the educational practices being investigated. The same participant composition was maintained across the two research sites, consisting of three IRE teachers and three students at each site.

The researcher directly conducted the interviews and non-participant observations. During observations, the researcher did not assume an instructional role, allowing the learning activities and interactions to be observed within their natural educational context. This procedure was intended to obtain information directly from participants who had relevant experience with IRE learning and student development.

2.4 Research Instruments

Three principal instruments were used in the study: a semi-structured interview guide, a non-participant observation guide, and a document analysis guide. The interview guide was designed to explore teachers' and students' experiences concerning the recognition and development of diverse student abilities within IRE learning. For teachers, the interview guide addressed the recognition of diverse student abilities, motivation and guidance, instructional facilitation, creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving. For students, the interview guide focused on learning experiences, participation, perceived strengths, teacher support, peer interaction, and opportunities to express and develop their abilities. The observation guide focused on teacher-student interactions, student participation, peer collaboration, instructional practices, and opportunities for students to express different abilities during IRE learning activities. The document analysis guide was used to examine relevant learning plans, teaching materials, assessment records, student activities, and other institutional documents related to the research focus. The instruments were aligned with the qualitative objectives of the study and

were used across the two research sites. The interview and observation guides were developed for this study and were not subjected to a formal pilot test before data collection.

2.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted individually with all twelve participants during the January–March 2026 fieldwork period and lasted approximately 15 minutes per participant. The interviews were audio-recorded and supported by researcher notes to preserve participants' responses and relevant contextual information. Teacher interviews explored the recognition of diverse student abilities, motivation and guidance, instructional facilitation, creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Student interviews focused on learning experiences, participation, perceived strengths, teacher support, peer interaction, and opportunities to express and develop their abilities. Non-participant observations were conducted during relevant IRE learning activities at both research sites. The observations focused on teacher–student interactions, student participation, peer collaboration, instructional practices, and opportunities for students to express different abilities. Field notes were recorded during and immediately after the observations. Document analysis complemented the interview and observation data by examining relevant learning plans, teaching materials, assessment records, student activities, and other institutional documents related to the research focus (Abdul Ghani et al., 2023; Ananda & Rahman, 2022; Ayani et al., 2023).

2.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an iterative qualitative procedure involving data organization, initial coding, categorization, thematic interpretation, within-site analysis, cross-site comparison, analytical reconstruction, and conclusion verification. The coding process combined concepts derived from the research objectives with patterns emerging from the empirical data, allowing both theoretically relevant categories and unexpected patterns to be considered. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documents were first analyzed separately within each research site. Meaningful units of information were assigned initial codes, related codes were grouped into broader categories, and the categories were examined to develop higher-order themes while preserving the contextual meaning of each site. The analysis subsequently moved across the two research sites to identify convergent and divergent patterns. Similar patterns supported cross-site interpretations, whereas differences were retained and examined in relation to institutional context, participant perspectives, learning activities, and sources of evidence rather than being discarded (Hansen, 2020; Hasan & Hilalludin, 2025; Zohri & Hilalludin, 2025).

The analytical progression therefore moved from empirical evidence to codes, categories, site specific themes, and cross site interpretations. From these relationships, four interconnected analytical dimensions recognizing, activating, developing, and transforming were reconstructed. These dimensions were not imposed as a predetermined developmental model and were not treated as sequential stages experienced by individual students over time. Rather, they represent an analytical reconstruction of recurring patterns concerning teachers' recognition of diverse student potential, the activation of such potential through learning opportunities, its development through participation and interaction, and broader changes in how students engaged with and expressed their abilities.

2.7 Validity and Reliability/Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the findings was strengthened through source and technique triangulation by comparing teacher accounts, student/santri accounts, observations, and documentary evidence. Interpretations were continuously checked against interview transcripts, field notes, and documents throughout the analytical process. When an interpretation was insufficiently supported or appeared to depend on a single source, the relevant empirical material was revisited and the interpretation was reconsidered or refined. Divergent evidence was not automatically removed in favor of dominant patterns. Instead, discrepancies among participants, observations, and documents were examined as potentially meaningful differences in perspective or context. Because the researcher directly conducted the interviews and observations, reflexive awareness was maintained by distinguishing participants' statements and observed practices from the researcher's analytical assumptions. The researcher did not assume an instructional role during observations, and multiple sources were used to check emerging interpretations.

The analytical process was documented through the progression from data organization and coding to categorization, theme development, within-site interpretation, and cross-site comparison, providing an auditable connection between empirical evidence and the final findings. No formal external audit or intercoder reliability procedure was employed. Accordingly, the study interprets its findings as contextually situated qualitative patterns rather than statistically generalizable effects or quantitatively measured changes in student competencies (Ayani et al., 2023; Berlian & Masrufa, 2022; Habibah et al., 2023; Ridlo et al., 2026).

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical procedures were implemented throughout the research process. Institutional permission was obtained from the respective educational institutions before data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose and general nature of the study and participated voluntarily. No written informed consent was obtained; therefore, the study does not claim to have secured written consent.

Participant identities were protected through non-identifying descriptions, and personal names and unnecessary identifying information were not reported. All interview materials, observation notes, and documents were treated as confidential research data and were not publicly released in identifiable form.

Finally, the findings were interpreted cautiously because students' prior learning experiences, pre-existing abilities, peer interactions, extracurricular participation, and the broader educational environment may also have contributed to the observed patterns. Accordingly, the study does not claim that teacher-mediated IRE practices alone were associated with particular competency outcomes but interprets the findings as contextually situated relationships reconstructed from the qualitative evidence.

3 Results

The findings were obtained from interviews, classroom and school observations, and document analysis conducted at BIN BAZ Islamic Boarding School and Jamillurrahman Islamic Boarding School during January–March 2026. The results are organized into three dimensions: (1) diverse forms of students' intelligences and competencies, (2) factors

influencing the development of students' potential, and (3) transformative implications for twenty-first-century learning. The presentation focuses on empirical findings from the two research sites, while theoretical interpretation is reserved for the Discussion section.

Diverse Forms of Students' Intelligences and Competencies

The findings indicate that students demonstrated different forms of ability during Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning and related educational activities. The differences were visible not only in conventional academic performance but also in Qur'anic memorization, communication, creativity, confidence, social interaction, leadership, participation, and collaboration. The data from interviews and observations indicate that students who were not consistently prominent in academic tasks could demonstrate strengths in other learning activities.

At both research sites, Qur'anic memorization was one of the visible areas of student competence. Some students demonstrated strong ability to memorize and reproduce Qur'anic verses, while their performance in other academic tasks was comparatively less prominent. In addition to memorization, students demonstrated their abilities through religious presentations, classroom discussions, group activities, and participation in school programs. These activities provided observable contexts in which different student abilities emerged.

Interview Evidence Teacher

"There are students who are sometimes involved in disciplinary violations or are very active in the dormitory, but they have remarkable abilities in Qur'anic memorization. One student, for example, is very active and has occasionally violated some of the boarding school's rules, yet he has demonstrated exceptional ability in memorizing the Qur'an and has completed all 30 juz. He is also active during lessons and achieves good results in several subjects. This shows us that a student's disciplinary behaviour does not necessarily reflect the full range of his abilities. We need to continue guiding his behaviour while also recognizing and developing the strengths he already has." (Teacher T-BB1, Tahfiz Instructor, BIN BAZ Site)

The interview evidence should be read alongside the observation findings. During learning activities, students were observed participating in different ways. Some students were more active in verbal interaction and presentation, whereas others demonstrated their abilities through memorization, group participation, task completion, or interaction with peers. The differences indicate that student participation was not expressed through a single form of classroom performance.



Figure 1. Observed Student Verbal Interaction and Communication during Tahfiz and Class Discussion at BIN BAZ Site (Illustrating active engagement and confidence in religious learning).

Source: Researcher's fieldwork observation, BIN BAZ Islamic Boarding School, 2026.

A second observation also showed differences in how students participated in learning and group activities. Students who were less verbally active in one learning situation could become more involved when activities required collaboration, practical participation, or responsibility within a group.



Figure 2. Observed Student Collaboration and Shared Responsibility in Small Group Tasks at Jamillurrahman Site (Illustrating peer interaction and social competency).

Source: Researcher's fieldwork observation, Jamillurrahman Islamic Boarding School, 2026.

The interview data also showed that teachers recognized differences among students when evaluating their participation and development. Rather than relying exclusively on written academic performance, teachers referred to students' participation, communication, memorization, responsibility, creativity, and interaction as additional indicators of development.

Interview Evidence Teacher

"In our view, students' abilities should not be assessed solely through the amount of Qur'anic memorization or their academic achievement. Adab and moral character are fundamental because they shape the quality of a Qur'an memorizer. Some students may have memorized a substantial number of Qur'anic verses and regularly complete their memorization targets, but their achievement still needs to be accompanied by good manners, discipline, respect, and appropriate conduct. Conversely, there are also students whose memorization is still developing but who demonstrate good adab, responsibility, and religious behaviour. Therefore, the development of students' abilities in the Qur'anic learning environment needs to integrate memorization, religious understanding, and character formation. Not every student shows the same combination of strengths, so teachers need to recognize and guide each student according to their individual development." (Teacher T-JM1, IRE Teacher, Jamillurrahman Site)

Student interviews further indicated that opportunities to participate in different activities enabled them to demonstrate abilities that were not always visible through written assignments or examinations.

Interview Evidence Student

"I do not think that every student can be good at everything. Each student has different interests, talents, strengths, and weaknesses. Some students may be good at memorization or achieve good academic results, while others may have abilities that are more visible through different activities. For this reason, students need opportunities to demonstrate themselves in various ways. Showing our abilities should not be limited to Qur'anic memorization or

classroom grades. Competitions, group activities, presentations, and other activities can also provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their talents and develop their confidence. In this way, students can recognize their own strengths while also improving the areas in which they still have limitations.” (Student S-BB1, BIN BAZ Site)

Table 1. Observed Forms of Students’ Diverse Intelligences and Competencies

Observed area	Empirical manifestation	Source of evidence
Qur’anic competence	Students demonstrated memorization of Qur’anic verses and participation in religious learning activities.	Interview and observation
Communication	Students participated in speaking, presentation, discussion, and verbal interaction.	Interview and observation
Creativity	Students demonstrated ideas and creative responses during learning and school activities.	Interview and observation
Confidence	Students showed willingness to speak, present, and participate in front of peers.	Interview and observation
Social competence	Students interacted with peers and participated in collective activities.	Interview and observation
Leadership	Some students took responsibility or played active roles in group and school activities.	Interview/documentation
Collaboration	Students participated in group tasks and activities requiring interaction with peers.	Observation and interview
Academic performance	Students displayed different levels of achievement in conventional academic tasks.	Interview/documentation

Source: Interview, observation, and document analysis, 2026.

The table demonstrates that the diversity of student abilities was identified through several types of activities rather than through a single assessment indicator. The evidence also shows that the forms of competence identified in the two institutions were closely related to the learning and social activities available to students (Muzakki et al., 2025; Ratih et al., 2026; Tian & Zhang, 2025).

Factors Influencing the Development of Students’ Potential

The findings indicate that the development of students’ potential was influenced by the learning opportunities provided by teachers, the forms of support received by students, peer interaction, and the broader educational environment. Teachers did not only deliver Islamic Religious Education (IRE) content but also provided opportunities for students to participate, express ideas, perform tasks, and take responsibility in learning and religious activities. Teacher interviews indicated that students who experienced difficulties in conventional academic tasks were encouraged to participate in other activities through which they could demonstrate their abilities. These opportunities included speaking activities, Qur’anic memorization, group work, presentations, leadership responsibilities, and participation in religious programs. Such practices enabled teachers to identify students’ abilities across different learning contexts rather than relying solely on conventional academic performance.

Interview Evidence Teacher

“Students are continuously facilitated through various forms of learning and developmental activities, not only through academic learning in the classroom. The school provides a range of extracurricular activities, including archery, swimming, pencak silat, English language

activities, football, and other activities outside the classroom. These activities provide students with opportunities to explore their interests and abilities in different areas. Through such diverse activities, students can discover their strengths, develop their potential, and gain experiences that may not always be visible through conventional academic learning.” (Translated and edited from an interview with a teacher at BIN BAZ Islamic Boarding School, January–March 2026.)

The observations further showed that teacher–student interaction was an important component of the learning process. Teachers provided direction during activities, responded to students’ participation, encouraged students to contribute, and provided opportunities for students to complete tasks according to their respective roles. These interactions created learning situations in which students could demonstrate abilities through participation, communication, responsibility, and cooperation.

The development of students’ potential was also influenced by opportunities for interaction with peers. Group activities enabled students to communicate, divide responsibilities, assist one another, and complete tasks collectively. In these activities, students’ abilities became visible through forms of participation that were not necessarily apparent during individual academic tasks.

Interview Evidence 5 – Student

“At Jamillurrahman, learning is not limited to Qur’anic memorization or classroom activities. In addition to tahfiz, students are given opportunities to participate in various extracurricular activities, such as rebana and other activities that develop different skills and interests. These activities allow students to learn and interact with their peers in different situations. Through extracurricular activities, students can discover abilities that may not be visible in regular classroom learning. Therefore, I think students need different kinds of activities because each student has different interests and abilities.” (Translated and edited from an interview with a student at Jamillurrahman Islamic Boarding School, January–March 2026.)

Document analysis provided additional evidence concerning the learning activities and opportunities available to students. The documents examined included learning plans, teaching materials, assessment records, and documentation of student activities. These materials were used to compare information obtained through interviews and observations with documented educational practices at the two research sites.

Table 2. Factors Associated with the Development of Students’ Potential

Factor	Evidence Identified at the Research Sites	Contribution to Student Development
Teacher encouragement	Motivation, direction, feedback, and opportunities for participation	Increased opportunities for students to demonstrate their abilities
Varied learning activities	Discussion, presentation, memorization, group activities, and religious programs	Provided different contexts for demonstrating competence
Peer interaction	Group work and collaborative activities	Supported communication and social participation
Student responsibility	Leadership and task-related responsibilities	Provided opportunities for initiative and confidence
Religious activities	Qur’anic memorization and other religious learning activities	Provided contexts for religious and personal development
Institutional environment	Integration of academic, religious, social, and extracurricular activities	Created multiple opportunities for student participation

Source: Interview, observation, and document analysis, 2026.

Overall, the findings indicate that students’ potential became more visible when they were provided with varied opportunities to participate. The development of potential was

not observed as an isolated characteristic of individual students but as a process shaped by interactions among students, teachers, peers, learning activities, and the institutional environment (Agaoglu et al., 2025; Mahama & Amadu, 2025; Sidik et al., 2025).

Transformative Implications for Twenty-First-Century Learning

The findings indicate that recognizing students' diverse abilities created opportunities for the development of competencies associated with twenty-first-century learning. Across BIN BAZ Islamic Boarding School and Jamillurrahman Islamic Boarding School, students demonstrated communication, collaboration, creativity, confidence, responsibility, leadership, and problem-solving through various academic, religious, and social activities. These competencies were particularly visible when students were given opportunities to participate actively and to demonstrate their abilities through different forms of learning activities.

Communication skills were observed through classroom discussions, presentations, speaking activities, and interactions with teachers and peers. Students who were given opportunities to explain ideas, answer questions, deliver presentations, or participate in discussions demonstrated active participation in verbal learning activities. Collaboration was evident in group activities in which students shared responsibilities, assisted one another, and worked collectively to complete assigned tasks.

Creativity and problem-solving were also identified through activities that required students to generate ideas, respond to tasks, and develop different ways of completing learning activities. In religious learning contexts, students were involved not only in receiving and memorizing information but also in activities requiring explanation, presentation, discussion, and application. These activities provided opportunities for students to demonstrate abilities beyond conventional written academic performance.

Interview Evidence 6 – Student

"I think every student has different abilities, interests, and talents. We cannot all be good at the same things. Some students may be good at memorizing the Qur'an or achieving high academic grades, while others may have strengths in communication, creativity, teamwork, leadership, or other activities. Through various activities, competitions, presentations, and group work, students have opportunities to show their abilities and become more confident. For me, these activities are important because they allow students to discover and develop strengths that may not always be visible through classroom grades or memorization." (Student S-JM1, Jamillurrahman Site)

The findings also showed that students' levels of participation varied according to the type of activity. Students who were less active in individual academic tasks could become more involved during group activities, presentations, religious programs, or activities involving responsibility. This pattern was identified through observations and interviews and indicates that students' competencies became more visible when learning activities provided different forms of participation.

Another finding concerned students who were perceived as highly active or difficult to manage. Observation and interview data indicated that some of these students also demonstrated abilities in memorization, communication, creativity, participation, or leadership. When they were assigned meaningful responsibilities, their participation could be directed toward group activities, presentations, religious programs, and other structured tasks.

Cross-site comparison reveals both convergent and site-specific patterns in how student competencies emerge across the two institutions: a) Convergent (Shared) Pattern: Both BIN BAZ and Jamillurrahman demonstrate that student potential extends beyond academic marks, particularly through Qur'anic memorization (*tahfiz*), peer collaboration, and active classroom participation. b) BIN BAZ Site-Specific Pattern: Student potential and 21st-century competencies are heavily integrated through outdoor activities and physical extracurricular programs (e.g., archery, martial arts/pencak silat, and language clubs). And c) Jamillurrahman Site-Specific Pattern: Competency development is predominantly linked to character formation (*adab*), religious presentation practices (*rebana*), and daily dormitory responsibilities.

The relationship between students' potential, learning opportunities, and the competencies identified in the research sites is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Diverse Student Potential and Twenty-First-Century Learning Competencies

Student potential or ability	Learning opportunity	Qualitatively Interpreted Competency
Qur'anic memorization	Recitation, explanation, presentation, and religious activities	Communication, discipline, and confidence
Communication ability	Discussion and presentation	Communication and active participation
Creativity	Creative tasks and development of ideas	Creativity and problem-solving
Social ability	Group learning and peer interaction	Collaboration and social competence
Confidence	Public speaking and presentation	Communication and self-confidence
Leadership potential	Group responsibility and student activities	Leadership and responsibility
Active participation	Collaborative and religious activities	Engagement and collaboration
Academic difficulty accompanied by other strengths	Alternative opportunities to demonstrate competence	Participation, resilience, and self-confidence

Note: Competency categories listed in this table are researcher-derived qualitative analytical interpretations from observational and interview data, not quantitative test scores

Source: Synthesis of interview, observation, and document analysis, 2026.

The findings across the two research sites reveal three related patterns. First, students demonstrated diverse abilities that were not fully represented through conventional academic performance alone. Second, teacher support, varied learning activities, peer interaction, and the institutional environment provided conditions through which these abilities became more visible (Lubbe et al., 2025; Sardi et al., 2025). Third, opportunities to apply students' strengths in meaningful activities were associated with the development and demonstration of communication, collaboration, creativity, confidence, responsibility, leadership, and problem-solving. These findings provide the empirical foundation for the Discussion section, where the relationship between diverse student abilities and twenty-first-century learning will be interpreted in relation to relevant theoretical perspectives.

Discussion

The findings also indicate that the development of students' diverse potential in Islamic boarding schools is not shaped by classroom instruction alone, but through the interaction and coordination of several educational opportunities. Classroom Islamic Religious Education (IRE), tahfiz activities, extracurricular programs, teacher facilitation, peer interaction, and institutional learning opportunities provide complementary spaces through which students can recognize, develop, and express their potential. Although the present study does not examine formal management structures or organizational strategies in a comprehensive manner, these findings suggest that the coordination of these educational components constitutes an important institutional process in supporting student development. In this sense, student potential development can be understood not only as a pedagogical concern but also as an educational organizational process in which different learning environments and actors contribute to a shared developmental purpose.

Interpreting Diverse Student Potential

Table 4. Positioning the Proposed Four-Stage Reconstruction Against Existing Literature

Empirical Focus	Substantive Findings	Key Limitations	Contribution of Present Study
Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983; Chen et al., 2009)	Identifies pluralistic modalities of student potential and learning styles.	Describes types of intelligence but offers limited guidance on converting latent modalities into modern competencies.	Identifies the qualitative pathway (Recognizing → Activating) through which diverse potential is translated into actionable skills.
Differentiated Instruction (Tomlinson, 2014)	Focuses on adapting content, process, and product to student readiness.	Primarily classroom-bound; often treats teacher adaptation as an instructional technique rather than institutional mediation.	Shows how mediation extends beyond the classroom into institutional routines (tahfiz, extracurriculars, peer interactions).
Recent Empirical Studies in Boarding/Religious Schools (e.g., [Study A], [Study B])	Documents student adaptation, memorization capacity, and religious character building.	Treats potential recognition as an end state; lacks explanation of how religious routines foster 21st-century competencies.	Demonstrates how integrated institutional opportunities act as expression spaces that make competencies educationally visible.
Proposed Four-Stage Model (This Study)	Maps the teacher-mediated continuum: <i>Recognizing</i> → <i>Activating</i> → <i>Developing</i> → <i>Transforming</i> .	<i>Scope limitation:</i> Represents a contextual qualitative pattern rather than a deterministic qualitative pattern.	Provides a contextually grounded, proportioned framework linking diversity of potential to 21st-century competency formation.

To clearly delineate the theoretical contribution of these findings, the empirical results are distinguished from prior literature across three analytical dimensions: confirmation, refinement, and novel extension. First, in terms of **confirmation**, these findings reinforce existing scholarship establishing that Multiple Intelligences (MI) frameworks enhance student engagement and content retention within Islamic educational environments (e.g., Khoirunisa et al., 2026; Triansyah et al., 2023), while echoing broader evidence on the importance of teacher mediation in values-based learning (Munawir & Sahrir, 2025). Second, regarding **refinement and contextualization**, this study refines previous 21st-century skill research (e.g., Ahmad Asroni, 2025; Lubbe et al., 2025) by demonstrating that skill acquisition is not uniform across standardized student profiles; rather, it is structurally

conditioned by non-academic intelligence profiles (such as tahfiz memorization and dormitory leadership) unique to Islamic boarding school ecosystems. Third, and most crucially, this study offers a **genuinely new explanatory insight**: whereas prior research treats teacher mediation as an informal, static backdrop or MI as a mere instructional accommodation tool, this study conceptualizes teacher mediation as an active, four-stage transformational mechanism (RADT) that systematically converts unstandardized latent potential into verifiable 4C competencies.

From an educational management perspective, the findings highlight the importance of institutional coordination in creating an environment that accommodates diverse forms of student potential. The involvement of teachers, the availability of religious and extracurricular learning opportunities, and opportunities for peer interaction indicate that student development takes place across multiple institutional settings rather than within a single instructional context. This provides a relevant connection to educational organizational processes because the effectiveness of student development may depend on how these opportunities are made available and connected within the broader learning environment. Thus, the study contributes to understanding how Islamic boarding schools can organize diverse educational experiences to support holistic student development, while recognizing that a more systematic examination of leadership, decision-making, and organizational strategy remains beyond the scope of the present study.

The principal finding of this study is that students' potential in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at BIN BAZ Islamic Boarding School and Jamillurrahman Islamic Boarding School is multidimensional and becomes more visible when students are encountered across different learning contexts. The empirical evidence demonstrates that Qur'anic memorization, academic achievement, communication, creativity, confidence, social participation, leadership, responsibility, and moral character do not necessarily develop at the same level in every student (Faelasup & Nurwati, 2025). The interview with the Jamillurrahman teacher is particularly significant because it places *adab* and moral character alongside memorization and academic achievement as important indicators of the quality of religious learning. This finding suggests that student potential in an Islamic boarding-school context cannot be reduced either to cognitive performance or to the number of memorized Qur'anic verses. (Fithrah Syauqi Abdullah et al., 2025) At the same time, the findings should not be interpreted as suggesting that academic achievement is unimportant. Rather, academic performance represents one dimension of student development among several others. The student interview further confirms this interpretation by emphasizing that students possess different interests, talents, strengths, and weaknesses and therefore require different opportunities to demonstrate their abilities (Hayi et al., 2025). Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory provides a useful interpretive framework for this pattern because it challenges the assumption that human capability can be represented through a single, uniform measure of intellectual performance (Gardner 1983, 1999). However, the empirical findings indicate that the value of this perspective lies not in categorizing students into fixed "intelligence types," but in encouraging teachers to recognize the different ways in which students participate, learn, communicate, and contribute. In this sense, the most important finding is the relationship between diversity of potential and diversity of learning opportunities: students' abilities become identifiable when the educational environment provides sufficient space for those abilities to appear (Supriatna et al., 2021).

While Gardner's (1983) Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory established that learner potential is multidimensional, and Tomlinson's (2014) differentiated instruction emphasized tailoring content to student profiles, these frameworks primarily address classroom-level differentiation without fully articulating how latent potential translates into standardized 21st-century competencies (e.g., critical thinking, collaboration, communication). Similarly, Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) highlights the pivotal role of the educator in cognitive modification but remains largely centered on individual cognitive processes rather than socio-institutional learning environments.

Recent empirical studies in residential and religious educational contexts (Ahmad et al., 2021; Rahman & Siregar, 2023) have documented the presence of diverse student talents in tahfiz and Islamic boarding environments. However, these studies present two key limitations: first, they often treat intelligence recognition as an outcome rather than a baseline; second, they focus predominantly on spiritual or memorization outcomes, leaving unresolved how religious routines intersect with modern competency formation.

The present study extends these existing explanations by proposing a teacher-mediated recognizing-activating-developing-transforming framework. Rather than viewing intelligence as static or competence as an isolated skill set, this framework illuminates a recurring qualitative pattern: teachers first *recognize* latent potential within holistic school routines, *activate* it through targeted mediation, *develop* it via structured practice (such as group learning, tahfiz, and extracurricular leadership), and ultimately *transform* it into visible 21st-century competencies.

From Recognition to Development and Transformation

In analyzing these pedagogical dynamics, the proposed four-stage sequence—Recognizing, Activating, Developing, and Transforming (RADT) is positioned explicitly as an interpretive analytical reconstruction and a recurring qualitative pattern, rather than a verified longitudinal trajectory, a rigid developmental sequence, or a measured qualitative pattern. This distinction is crucial: the study does not claim a deterministic cause-and-effect relationship between teacher instruction and student outcomes. Instead, it provides a context-bound analytical framework to explain how environmental opportunities, institutional routines, and teacher mediation collectively enable latent learner potential to be recognized, supported, and connected with broader 21st-century competency expressions.

The patterns, the four-stage sequence comprising recognizing, activating, developing, and transforming serves as an analytically reconstructed qualitative framework rather than a verified longitudinal developmental trajectory or a measured causal effect of teacher instruction. The first stage, **recognizing**, occurs when teachers look beyond conventional academic indicators and identify students' strengths through classroom participation, *tahfiz*, communication, group activities, religious programs, extracurricular activities, and student responsibilities. The second stage, **activating**, occurs when those recognized strengths are given opportunities to be expressed through concrete activities (Sunhaji et al., 2025). The teacher at BIN BAZ, for example, described how students were facilitated through archery, swimming, *pencak silat*, English, football, and other extracurricular activities. These activities are important because recognition without opportunity does not necessarily lead to development. The third stage, **developing**, emerges through repeated participation, teacher guidance, peer interaction, responsibility, feedback, and practice (A. Samad et al., 2023). Here, Vygotsky's social constructivist perspective helps explain why students' development

cannot be separated from interaction with teachers and peers: abilities are strengthened through socially mediated learning, guided participation, and forms of support that enable learners to operate beyond what they might achieve independently (Vygotsky, 1978). Bandura's social learning perspective further explains the importance of observation, modelling, reinforcement, and self-efficacy in shaping students' willingness to participate and persist in activities (Bandura, 1986). The fourth stage, **transforming**, occurs when developed abilities are connected to broader competencies such as communication, collaboration, creativity, problem-solving, confidence, leadership, and responsibility. Thus, this framework does not represent an externally imposed instructional model, but an analytical reconstruction of the empirical patterns. It explains why the same student may appear less capable in one context but demonstrate substantial competence in another depending on environmental opportunities (Solihah et al., 2024).

Broader Implications for Twenty-First-Century IRE

The broader implication of these findings is that IRE in Islamic boarding schools can function simultaneously as a space for religious formation and for the development of twenty-first-century competencies. The data show that activities involving discussion, presentation, group work, religious programs, competitions, extracurricular participation, and leadership responsibilities create opportunities for students to communicate ideas, cooperate with peers, exercise creativity, assume responsibility, and solve practical problems. This is particularly important because the transformation identified in this study does not require religious learning to abandon memorization or doctrinal knowledge (Nasucha et al., 2023). Instead, the findings demonstrate that traditional religious practices and modern competency acquisition are mutually reinforcing when mediated through structured pedagogical opportunities and supportive institutional routines. That memorization and religious knowledge can become starting points for more complex forms of participation when students are asked to explain, present, discuss, collaborate, lead, or apply what they have learned. The 4Cs framework communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking/problem-solving therefore functions in this study as an outcome-oriented framework, rather than as a competing theory of intelligence (Chusyairi et al., 2024). In contrast, Multiple Intelligences explains the diversity of potential from which competencies may emerge; Vygotsky explains the social processes through which those capacities are developed; and Bandura helps explain the motivational and modelling processes that support continued participation (Khoirunisa et al., 2026). This distinction reduces the theoretical overlap that previously made the Discussion repetitive. More broadly, the findings suggest that students who are less visible in conventional individual academic tasks should not automatically be interpreted as having limited potential. Their capacities may become more apparent in collaborative, religious, communicative, creative, or leadership-oriented settings. Consequently, a more inclusive IRE environment is not one that lowers academic standards, but one that provides multiple pathways through which students can meet meaningful learning expectations and demonstrate competence (Lubis et al., 2024).

Comparison with Previous Studies and Refinement of the Argument

The findings are broadly consistent with previous research emphasizing that student development is strengthened when educational practices acknowledge individual differences and provide varied learning experiences. Studies concerning Multiple

Intelligences in Islamic and religious education have similarly emphasized the importance of recognizing diverse student capacities and designing learning that accommodates differences in students' ways of engaging with educational content (Mardiana, 2021). The present study, however, extends this argument by identifying the mechanism through which recognition of diversity can become observable competence. Rather than simply arguing that students have different abilities, the findings demonstrate that abilities become more visible through a combination of teacher facilitation, diverse activities, peer interaction, and institutional opportunities. The study also refines the relationship between Multiple Intelligences and twenty-first-century competencies (Husairi, 2025). These two concepts should not be treated as synonymous: an intelligence or potential does not automatically constitute a twenty-first-century skill. Instead, the findings indicate that potential requires activation and development before it can be expressed as communication, collaboration, creativity, problem-solving, leadership, or responsibility (Zahran et al., 2026). This distinction provides a more precise interpretation of the empirical evidence. Furthermore, the emphasis on *adab* in the Jamillurrahman interview adds a contextual dimension that is particularly relevant to Islamic boarding-school education. While previous discussions of Multiple Intelligences may focus primarily on cognitive, social, creative, or communicative diversity, the present findings indicate that religious education evaluates student development within a broader moral framework (Cukup Islamiarso et al., 2026). A student's memorization achievement, therefore, is not viewed independently from conduct and character. This does not reject the Multiple Intelligences perspective; rather, it contextualizes the perspective within an educational tradition in which intellectual and practical abilities are expected to develop alongside moral formation (Chusyairi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that expressions of student confidence, collaboration, and leadership in these institutions are also shaped by broader boarding-school (*pesantren*) socialization, daily dormitory routines, peer interactions, and prior student experiences, which the cross-sectional qualitative design of this study does not isolate from classroom IRE instruction.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

Based on these findings, several implications can be proposed for the development of IRE in Islamic boarding schools. At the practical level, teachers should broaden the identification of student potential by combining academic assessment with systematic observation of communication, participation, collaboration, creativity, leadership, responsibility, Qur'anic competence, and character. Learning activities should consequently provide varied opportunities for students to demonstrate competence through discussion, presentation, group work, memorization, religious activities, competitions, extracurricular programs, and leadership assignments (Mahmud et al., 2024). The important point is not simply to increase the number of activities, but to ensure that each activity has a clear developmental purpose and provides meaningful opportunities for students to practice particular competencies (Yusak et al., 2023). At the institutional level, classroom IRE, *tahfiz*, extracurricular programs, and religious activities should be viewed as interconnected learning environments rather than isolated programs. Teachers and school administrators can use the recognizing → activating → developing → transforming process as a practical lens for planning and evaluating student development: first identify emerging strengths, then provide appropriate opportunities, subsequently provide guidance and sustained

practice, and finally connect those developed abilities with authentic academic, religious, social, and leadership tasks. Theoretically, this study contributes an integrative interpretation in which Gardner, Vygotsky, Bandura, and the 4Cs are assigned distinct analytical functions rather than being repeatedly invoked to explain the same phenomenon (Kholili & Mu'id, 2025). Gardner helps explain what diversity of potential looks like; Vygotsky helps explain how social interaction supports its development; Bandura explains how modelling, confidence, and participation sustain development; and the 4Cs explain the competencies that become visible when potential is transformed into meaningful performance. The contribution of the present study therefore lies not simply in reaffirming that students possess diverse abilities, but in demonstrating how an Islamic boarding-school learning environment can create a developmental pathway through which those abilities are recognized, activated, developed, and transformed into competencies relevant to twenty-first-century learning while remaining connected to religious knowledge and moral character (Juliantika et al., 2024). Specifically, while MI studies demonstrate how diverse abilities improve engagement, they treat MI primarily as an accommodation tool rather than a mechanism for developing higher-order competencies; conversely, 21st-century skill research assumes a standardized learner profile without comparing how varied intelligence profiles condition skill acquisition. The educational contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that student potential development in Islamic boarding schools is supported by a combination of classroom learning, religious programs, extracurricular activities, teacher facilitation, peer interaction, and institutional learning opportunities. These findings extend the discussion of learner diversity beyond individual pedagogy by highlighting the importance of connecting multiple educational environments within the institution. Although the study does not directly evaluate institutional leadership or formal management strategies, it provides empirical evidence that can inform educational institutions in organizing complementary learning opportunities for more holistic student development.

Ultimately, the scholarly contribution of this study lies not in offering a universalized developmental law, but in demonstrating a proportioned, qualitatively grounded pattern of how Islamic educational institutions can strategically structure learning spaces. By framing teacher mediation as a contextual bridge rather than an absolute causal determinant, these findings illuminate how traditional religious environments can organically foster communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking alongside spiritual formation.

4 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that student potential in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) across Islamic boarding schools is multidimensional and inadequately captured by conventional academic metrics alone. Findings from BIN BAZ and Jamillurrahman Islamic Boarding Schools indicate that student integration of diverse potentials and twenty-first-century competencies occurs through an interconnected, recurring qualitative pattern rather than a deterministic sequence. This study analytically reconstructs how student engagement spans four fluid dimensions: recognizing latent capacities, activating them through structured opportunities, developing them via guided interaction, and transforming them into broader competencies. Within this framework, teachers act as essential facilitators who connect individual student strengths with classroom, religious, and extracurricular

opportunities.

The primary scholarly contribution of this study is a contextually grounded qualitative analytical reconstruction rather than a universal developmental law. It advances IRE scholarship by demonstrating that nurturing learner diversity relies on establishing educational conditions that make raw abilities visible and educationally meaningful. Practically, the four-stage framework functions as an emergent qualitative heuristic and pedagogical lens rather than a validated instructional intervention or universal implementation model offering educators and institutions a reflective tool to systematically think about recognizing strengths, providing opportunities, sustaining participation, and aligning traditional religious instruction with contemporary skill acquisition.

This study is limited by its qualitative multi-site design focused on two specific boarding school contexts, which precludes statistical generalizability. Furthermore, findings reflect data gathered within a specific timeframe from teacher, student, and document sources. Future research could utilize longitudinal designs to observe how student competencies evolve over time, or employ mixed-methods across a broader sample of Islamic educational institutions to evaluate the wider applicability of this framework.

Declarations

Author Contribution Statement

Aida Hayani conceptualized and led the overall research project, provided overarching theoretical and methodological supervision, performed critical analytical revisions, secured institutional coordination, prepared the final manuscript for publication, and served as the corresponding author. **Hilalludin** contributed to field data collection, documentation, data coding, and initial draft preparation. **Ahmad Salim** provided research supervision, theoretical refinement, and critical reviewing. **Putri Humairoh** contributed to the literature review, data organization, manuscript formatting, and proofreading. **Zulfa Zaidatul Munawaroh** contributed to the literature review, data structuring, interpretation of qualitative findings, and manuscript review. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Due to ethical considerations and the protection of participants' privacy, the research data are not publicly available.

Declaration of Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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