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## **Implementing Differentiated Assessment in Islamic Religious Education to Enhance Students' Critical Thinking in the Context of the Merdeka Curriculum at Senior High Schools**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores the experience of an Islamic education teacher in implementing differentiated assessments and analyzes their impact on students' critical thinking development. A qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method was used to collect data through an in-depth interview with a PAI teacher at SMAN 7 Bandung, which was supported by relevant literature. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction, display, and drawing conclusions. The results demonstrate that differentiated assessments provide students with opportunities to express their understanding in creative and reflective ways. This approach also promotes the development of Ennis's five critical thinking indicators: clarification, basic support, inference, advanced argumentation, and self-regulation. The study concludes that differentiated assessment significantly enhances students' critical thinking skills in Islamic religious education.

**Keywords:** Differentiated Assessment; Critical Thinking; Islamic Religious Education

## A. INTRODUCTION

The changing paradigm of education in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century allows the need for a fundamental transformation of the learning process. Today, education does not only focus on transferring knowledge from teachers to students in one direction; it must also focus on developing more comprehensive and applicable competencies. One important competency in this era is higher-order thinking skills, particularly critical thinking (Ramdani et al., 2020; Thornhill-Miller, 2023). These skills enable students to actively process, evaluate, and apply information to make logical, objective, and responsible decisions (Jannah & Miftah, 2025). This skill improves not only the quality of thinking but also contributes to forming attitudes and strengthening students' personal competencies. Therefore, critical thinking is an important foundation for developing complete intelligence. This skill can be strengthened not only through general subjects but also in the context of Islamic Religious Education. By integrating moral and spiritual values from religious teachings, Islamic Religious Education balances intellectual development and character building (Barlian & Solekah, 2022; Kurniawan et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, conditions in the field show that there are still various obstacles to Islamic Religious Education learning and assessment at the educational unit level. One of the main problems is that the learning model still tends to be text-based and teacher-centered. Learning is primarily focused on memorizing Quranic verses, Hadith, and normative arguments without providing students with sufficient opportunities to study and interpret Islamic values in a more contextualized manner. Consequently, students often only understand religion superficially and formally, limiting their understanding to cognitive aspects. This makes it difficult for them to connect religious teachings with the reality of everyday life (Mukhlisin, 2023). Furthermore, although teachers realize that students have different characteristics and learning needs in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, the learning and assessment approaches applied are still uniform and conventional (Sukmawati, 2022). The lack of varied learning and assessment strategies that respond to individual differences remains an obstacle to developing students' critical and reflective thinking skills. Many educational institutions remain stuck in conventional methods that do not adapt to students' learning needs (Chan et al., 2025). Consequently, students struggle to transition to independent and reflective learning (Risana et al., 2025). This situation underscores the importance of innovations in learning and assessment that are more contextual, adaptive, and oriented toward developing higher-order thinking.

One strategic effort to overcome various problems is implementing a differentiated learning and assessment approach. This approach aims to accommodate students' diverse readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. This approach enables teachers to address the varied characteristics of their students, including cognitive abilities, learning styles, interests, and cultural backgrounds (Ghani, 2023). Differentiated learning creates an inclusive environment where every student has the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential, regardless of their individual differences. It emphasizes focusing on the process of understanding and personal progress rather than achieving uniform material targets (Khasanah, 2024). In the context of PAI learning, differentiation is particularly relevant because the subject transmits religious knowledge and shapes students' attitudes, values, and spiritual awareness. Differentiation in PAI learning enables teachers to pedagogically respond to student diversity, making learning more adaptive and meaningful. This diversity includes variations in mastery of the material, learning speed, cultural and religious background, and interests and learning styles (Insani & Munandar, 2023).

Additionally, differentiated learning and assessment are closely related to developing critical thinking skills. According to Ennis, critical thinking encompasses five primary characteristics: clarification, supporting evidence, inference, further argument, and self-regulation. These characteristics can be developed through differentiated learning and assessment. Differentiated assessment can effectively stimulate students' cognitive mechanisms through adjustment strategies in three main components: content, process, and product. For instance, Rositawati's (2019) research demonstrates that when teachers adapt content to students' ability levels, students are motivated to analyze the material more deeply. Additionally, when the learning process is tailored to individual learning styles, students learn to evaluate and reflect on their understanding. Through product differentiation, students are given the opportunity to synthesize ideas in creative and argumentative ways. Thus, differentiated assessment serves not only to evaluate learning outcomes, but also as a pedagogical tool that systematically and continuously promotes higher-order thinking activities.

Researchers widely discuss the topic of differentiation approaches in learning and assessment. Some studies show that applying differentiation, especially in Islamic religious education lessons, can increase students' engagement and enthusiasm for learning. For instance, Saprudin and Nurwahidin's research revealed that students became more enthusiastic when they were allowed to select

media that aligned with their interests and learning styles to reflect on PAI materials. Despite using different media, all students achieved the same goal: to make PAI lessons more enjoyable and promote character development according to the Qur'an and Hadith (Saprudin & Nurwahidin, 2021). Another study by Zulkifli et al. showed similar results when they applied differentiation by adjusting content, learning methods, and learning outcomes according to students' needs. As a result, students understood the lessons more easily because the methods were adapted to their learning styles. However, this study also identified obstacles, including teachers having difficulty linking material to everyday life, inappropriate language use, limited time and facilities, and an assessment system that does not support the differentiated approach (Zulkifli et al., 2025).

Unlike previous research (Zulkifli et al., 2025; Saprudin & Nurwahidin, 2021), which emphasized the ability of differentiated learning to increase motivation, enthusiasm, and understanding of subject matter, this study will focus on the application of differentiation-based learning assessments in Islamic Religious Education subjects and their implications for improving critical thinking skills at the senior high school level. This focus is important because assessment is an integral part of the learning process. Assessment not only measures academic achievement but also encourages the development of higher-order thinking skills, such as critical, analytical, and reflective thinking. These skills are essential in 21<sup>st</sup>-century education.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research employed a qualitative approach with descriptive-analytical methods. This method was used to systematically and thoroughly describe the implementation of differentiated assessments in Islamic religious education learning within the independent curriculum at the high school level. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with an Islamic Religious Education teacher at SMAN 7 Bandung, who was the primary participant. The teacher was purposely selected because of her direct experience with implementing differentiated assessments in Islamic Religious Education at the high school level. The interviews explored the teacher's experiences designing, implementing, and evaluating differentiated assessments and her views on their impact on students' critical thinking skills. Additionally, a literature review covering various sources, such as national journals, scientific books, and education policy documents, supplemented this study to strengthen its theoretical foundation and provide a more comprehensive context regarding the practice of differentiated assessment, the

concept of critical thinking, and its relevance in Islamic education based on the Independent Curriculum.

This study employed the interactive model of data analysis by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. During the data reduction stage, the researcher transcribed the interview with the Islamic Education teacher from SMAN 7 Bandung and identified and selected key statements related to differentiated assessment applications and students' critical thinking development. In the data presentation stage, the researcher organized the reduced information into thematic categories, such as differentiation in content, process, and product, as well as how these aspects relate to critical thinking indicators. The data were presented in descriptive narratives supported by quotations from the teacher's interview. During the conclusion stage, the researcher interpreted the findings to identify patterns and implications of differentiated assessment on students' critical thinking skills. To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher conducted source triangulation by comparing the interview data with documentation and theoretical references. These steps were carried out iteratively until the findings provided a clear and comprehensive picture of the studied phenomenon.

### **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **1. Implementation of Differentiated Assessment in PAI**

At SMAN 7 Bandung, the implementation of assessment in PAI learning can no longer be understood as merely an administrative, mechanical, and formal activity. Instead, it has become a key element that determines the strategic direction, substantive quality, and sustainability of meaningful learning processes. In this context, the central role of assessment lies in its function as a dynamic link between pedagogical vision and the reality of students' learning achievements, reflecting conceptual understanding, character building, and mastery of applicative skills.

In the context of learning, assessment can no longer be viewed merely as a tool for measuring learning outcomes; it has evolved into a strategic component that determines the success of the entire educational process (Agustianti et al., 2022). In this framework, effective assessments must thoroughly cover three main domains of student development: cognitive aspects reflecting the ability to think and understand concepts; affective aspects related to attitudes, values, and emotions; and psychomotor aspects focusing on physical skills and actions (Hidayah, 2024).

These three domains are inseparable foundations for developing students' potential. Furthermore, in line with the demands of 21<sup>st</sup>-century education, which emphasizes higher-order thinking skills, assessment must also function as a means of strengthening reasoning, reflective thinking, and critical problem-solving skills (Akhyar et al., 2024; Sholahudin et al., 2025). This aligns with the perspective of an Islamic religious education teacher at SMAN 7 Bandung who adapts to the evolving needs of education.

Ideally, assessment in learning should function not only as a tool to measure academic achievement but also to foster critical thinking and creativity in students. In the context of modern education, especially in the current era of technological advances and information disruption, students need training that goes beyond mere memorization. They must learn to analyze, evaluate, and generate new, relevant ideas (PAI teacher interview).

The demand for comprehensive assessments certainly motivates Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers to design assessments that are no longer uniform or conventional. In the midst of increasingly complex learning dynamics, teachers must be able to present assessments that not only orient students toward mastery of the material but also raise awareness of critical thinking, encourage deep self-reflection, and progressively develop students' reasoning power. To address this challenge, PAI teachers at SMAN 7 Bandung use a differentiated assessment approach that adapts to student characteristics.

When implementing differentiated assessments, I pay close attention to each student's characteristics. At the beginning of the lesson, I don't jump into the material right away; first, I observe their learning styles. Some students tend to be visual learners, some learn better through audio, and some are a combination of audiovisual learners. Based on these observations, I design flexible assessments according to their preferences (PAI teacher interview).

There are three learning styles, each with its own characteristics and advantages. The visual learning style relies on vision as the main means of absorbing lessons. Students with this learning style find it easier to understand material through pictures, diagrams, graphs, maps, and posters. They tend to be sensitive to colors and shapes. They remember what they see more easily than what they hear and prefer to read independently rather than listen to others. However, they often have difficulty expressing ideas verbally and can lose focus if the material is not presented attractively (Kusumardi, 2023).

Meanwhile, auditory learners rely more on their auditory abilities. Auditory learners usually understand lessons well through oral explanations, discussions, or direct listening (Batubara et al., 2023). They often learn by talking to themselves and reading aloud. They absorb information more easily through the intonation and rhythm of the voice. They have an advantage in their ability to speak and imitate speech quickly. However, they tend to have difficulty understanding material if it is not delivered orally. They are also easily distracted by surrounding sounds (Rosmi & Nurmalia, 2024). Audiovisual learners absorb information optimally when material is presented through a combination of sound and images, such as in learning videos or multimedia presentations. This style is effective for improving memory because the brain processes and stores information delivered visually and auditorily simultaneously more easily. With these two sensory stimuli, the brain becomes more active in processing the material, making learning more effective and enjoyable (Maharani & Wahyuni, 2024; Urba et al., 2024).

Understanding the diverse learning styles of each student allows teachers to play an active role in designing assessments that are fair and appropriate for each student's unique characteristics. This approach allows students to demonstrate their understanding in the way that is most comfortable and effective for them (Pratiwi et al., 2024; Westbroek, 2020). This aligns with the approach of the PAI teacher at SMAN 7 Bandung, who gives students more freedom to choose assessments that suit their learning styles.

My main principle is that assessments should not be burdensome for students. Therefore, I often assign creative projects such as mini vlogs or mind maps that suit their learning styles. For instance, when discussing *birrul walidain*, I don't limit students to one type of assignment. I give them the freedom to choose according to their learning style. Students who prefer to listen can write essays or record speeches. Those who are more visual can create posters or infographics. Students who like to perform can create a mini vlog. The goal is for all students to feel comfortable showing their understanding in the way that suits them best. Additionally, this approach encourages creativity and critical thinking (PAI teacher interview).

In the context of learning, the implementation of differentiated assessment cannot be viewed solely as a creative activity. Rather, it is a strategic instrument that measures the achievement of learning objectives designed beforehand. These objectives, which include knowledge, skills, and attitudes, must be formulated specifically, measurably, and relevantly to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the learning process (Shodiq, 2019). Formulating these objectives with clarity

provides educators with structured direction in designing teaching strategies and methods and ensures that each learner has a meaningful learning experience that aligns with their individual needs and characteristics (Dasopang, 2017). In practice, PAI teachers at SMAN 7 Bandung design learning objectives that are specific, measurable, and realistic, and they adjust them according to the time and capacity of the students in each class.

I don't set too many objectives for one meeting. For example, when discussing *birrul walidain*, I set two objectives: first, students understand its meaning; and second, students can cite related Qur'anic verses. This allows me to focus more when measuring achievement through interviews or questions. If there are too many objectives, the assessment becomes more difficult, and the results are less effective (PAI teacher interview).

PAI teachers at SMAN 7 Bandung use differentiated assessments that show assessment is more than just numbers on paper; it reflects each student's unique understanding and expression of knowledge. Students can express themselves through posters, speeches, mini vlogs, infographics, and other projects that reflect their character and learning style. This approach provides students with the widest possible space to demonstrate their understanding in the way that best suits them. This approach not only facilitates individual potential but also makes the learning process more inclusive, meaningful, and respectful of diversity. With this strategy, teachers measure knowledge and foster students' active engagement, self-confidence, and learning satisfaction. This makes the learning outcomes more optimal and effective in the long run.

## 2. Critical Thinking Skills in Learning

In the midst of globalization and the complex challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, education plays a central role in shaping future generations. In order to compete in the global arena, this generation must be not only intellectually intelligent, but also able to think critically and creatively, and possess strong moral integrity. To navigate the dynamics of the modern world, students must master key competencies, such as the ability to reason effectively, think systematically, make wise judgments and decisions, and solve problems (Mubarok et al., 2023; Subekt et al., 2018). This aligns with the perspective of the PAI teacher at SMAN 7 Bandung.

Of course, the PAI learning process and assessment must adapt to the times. In this fast-paced and open era, it is not enough for students to merely know the material; they must also possess good morals and critical thinking skills. In modern times, these two qualities are very important: morals guide

behavior, and critical thinking helps students filter information and make wise decisions. In PAI learning, I try to instill both in a balanced way (PAI teacher interview).

In the school environment, educators must pay serious attention to morals and critical thinking skills. As formal educational institutions, schools are strategically responsible for ensuring that they achieve educational quality standards that align with the demands of the national curriculum and support the realization of the Indonesian nation's vision by strengthening students' critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is defined as a high-level thinking process involving the objective and thorough identification, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information to produce logical, evidence-based, and justifiable conclusions in a particular context (Rachmadtullah, 2015).

Furthermore, Redecker explains that critical thinking is a skill that students can learn, practice, and master through learning that focuses on assessing, analyzing, and synthesizing information. This shows that critical thinking is not an innate ability, but one that can be systematically developed in a conducive educational environment (Susilowati & Sumaji, 2021). Similarly, Facione emphasized that critical thinking is a form of self-regulation in decision-making that includes the ability to interpret, analyze, evaluate, and infer using various approaches, such as evidence, concepts, methodologies, and contextual considerations, as the basis for argumentation. This ability allows students to not only understand a problem in depth but also to put forward logical, rational arguments (Suryadi, 2019). John Butterworth further refined this concept, emphasizing that critical thinking activities primarily consist of three elements: analysis, evaluation, and constructing advanced arguments (Sadikov, 2021; Santoso et al., 2023). Thus, critical thinking is an essential skill that must be developed through directed learning strategies. This produces graduates who not only master the material but are also able to think reflectively and argumentatively in dealing with life's problems.

Critical thinking is not an innate talent, but rather a competency that can be developed through a systematic, directed, and sustainable learning process within a structured cognitive framework. Training in critical thinking from an early age is crucial because it enables students to independently identify and solve problems, produce accurate knowledge, and make logical, responsible decisions (Liska et al., 2021). Furthermore, critical thinking functions not only as an intellectual tool but also has a close relationship with moral formation, social adjustment, spiritual

development, cognitive expansion, and the structuring of science in individuals (Nur Azizah Putri, 2022). In this context, Islam, a religion that upholds intellectual values, considers critical thinking skills essential for facing the dynamics and challenges of modern life.

This ability is mentioned in many verses of the Quran through terms such as *nadzara*, *tadabbara*, *tafakkara*, *faqihah*, *tazakkara*, and *fahima*. These terms describe intellectual activities, such as contemplating, understanding, studying in depth, and learning from the signs of Allah's power. Examples of these verses include Qaf: 6-7; al-Tariq: 5-7; al-Ghasiyah: 17; Sad: 29; Muhammad: 24; al-Nahl: 68-69; al-Jathiyah: 12-13; al-Isra': 44; al-An'am: 97-98; al-Taubah: 122; al-Zumar: 9, 27; al-Zariyat: 47-49; and al-Anbiya': 78-79. The Qur'an honors those who think deeply with titles such as *qaum ya'qilun*, *qaum yatafakkarun*, *ulul ilmi*, *ulul albab*, and *ulul absar*. These are people who are knowledgeable and have foresight (Fikri & Munfarida, 2023; Mariana et al., 2019). Therefore, it is not surprising that critical thinking is the main pillar in shaping educators and students who are productive, creative, and resistant to manipulation, propaganda, and misdirection in both thought and action (Fikri & Munfarida, 2023).

Furthermore, intellectual activities such as *tafakkur* (contemplation), *tadabbur* (in-depth study), and *ta'aqqul* (reasoning) not only guide humans to understand phenomena rationally and encourage self-reflection on the thinking process itself (Murtado & Badrudin, 2025). In the context of Islamic education assessment, *tafakkur* can be integrated into differentiated assessments that allow students to reflect on the values they have learned based on their thinking styles and abilities (Muktamar & Umar, 2024). Through project-based assessments, reflective journals, and creative works, for example, students can assess their learning outcomes, thinking processes, moral considerations, and spiritual awareness. Thus, the differentiated assessment approach not only evaluates cognitive achievements, but also instills Islamic critical thinking values, making *tafakkur* central to developing higher-order thinking skills in Islamic education.

To achieve this, a deep understanding of the indicators of critical thinking as classified by Ennis (1985; 2011) into five main aspects is required. The first aspect is elementary clarification, which includes the ability to focus questions, analyze arguments logically, and ask and answer critical questions. The second aspect is basic skill development, which involves evaluating the credibility of information sources and assessing the truth of a statement through critical and objective observation. The third aspect is inference, or the ability to compile and evaluate

deductive and inductive arguments to produce logical and justifiable conclusions. Fourth is preparation and evaluation of arguments (advanced clarification), which includes the ability to compose coherent arguments and consider various points of view and contexts. The fifth aspect is monitoring and self-regulation of thinking, which emphasizes reflecting on one's thinking process, identifying weaknesses, and revising based on in-depth critical evaluation. These five aspects are the pillars of developing academic skills and are also the main provisions of social, spiritual, and moral life amid the challenges of the times (Rahmawati et al., 2016).

### **3. Implications of Differentiated Assessment on Critical Thinking Skills in Islamic Education Learning**

Using differentiated assessments in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) can strengthen students' critical thinking skills. Based on the principle of adaptive assessment, this approach adjusts the learning process, content, and outcomes according to each student's needs, readiness, style, and interests (Fitriani et al., 2023; Naibaho, 2023). This strategy aligns with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum and reflects an inclusive, modern pedagogical approach that respects diversity in the classroom (Susila & Aryasuari, 2023). In the context of PAI learning, which is full of moral and spiritual values, differentiated assessment allows students to understand and express religious teachings in ways that align with their unique characters. Differentiated assessment is more than just an assessment method; it is a pedagogical tool that serves as a medium for exploring the deeper, more relevant meaning of learning. It includes a more comprehensive assessment dimension that considers cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Herwina, 2021). Thus, the evaluation process does not stop at measuring memorization or mastery of material alone; it also assesses attitudes, emotions, and real-life skills. In the framework of Islamic education, this approach is relevant to the vision of forming *Insan Kamil*: a complete human being who is intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and socially mature. This approach aligns with the views of PAI teachers at SMAN 7 Bandung.

In my opinion, PAI learning assessments are insufficient for measuring memorization or the extent to which students have mastered the material. What's more important is how students apply values to their daily lives through their attitudes, ways of thinking, and social interactions. I try to see the whole process, whether they start showing empathy, speaking well, or taking responsibility for their tasks. The ultimate goal of PAI is not only to be smart, but also to become a well-rounded person who is intelligent, kind, and has good behavior (PAI teacher interview).

When implementing differentiated assessments, teachers have a great opportunity to explore and develop each student's unique potential, including their thinking skills. One example of the differentiated assessment is how Islamic Education teachers at SMAN 7 Bandung teach the *birrul walidain* theme. With this approach, students can choose an assessment method that aligns with their interests and learning style, such as creating posters, composing speeches, making mini vlogs, or writing narrative essays.



**Figure 1.** Differentiated Assessment Activities

As shown in Figure 1, differentiated assessment encourages students to be more active and engaged based on their individual learning styles. In this activity, students presented the results of mini vlog projects that they created themselves as a form of authentic assessment. This approach enables each student to demonstrate their understanding of *birrul walidain* values using the medium that best showcases their abilities. This variety of products trains creativity and strengthens students' emotional involvement in the values being learned. Furthermore, having the freedom to express learning outcomes fosters the five indicators of critical thinking, according to Ennis: basic clarification, basic support, inference, advanced clarification, and self-regulation in thinking. These indicators are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Implementation of Ennis' Critical Thinking Indicators in PAI Learning through Differentiated Assessment

<b>Critical Thinking Indicators</b>	<b>Implementation in PAI Learning through Differentiated Assessment</b>
1. Elementary Clarification	Students are invited to understand basic concepts and Islamic terminology logically and clearly, which suits their individual learning styles.
2. Basic Support	Students are tasked with reviewing and evaluating Islamic sources on filial piety using an approach that suits their needs and abilities.
3. Inference	Students are trained to summarize Islamic values and relate them to contemporary life. Assessments may take the form of projects, videos, or essays.
4. Advanced Clarification	Students are encouraged to construct arguments from various social and religious perspectives according to their thinking potential.
5. Self-Monitoring and Self-Regulation	Students are encouraged to periodically reflect on their attitudes and actions through journals, personal discussions, or reflective presentations.

According to Ennis's five indicators of critical thinking, it can be said that differentiated assessment in PAI learning clearly contributes to the development of students' critical thinking skills. Tailoring each form of assessment to students' characteristics — such as tasks involving poster creation, mini vlogs, and narrative writing — enriches the way students express their understanding and trains them to think more deeply, systematically, and reflectively. The critical thinking that grows from this differentiated assessment model is not only a tool for developing intellectual intelligence; it is also proven to be closely related to forming noble morals, socialization skills, strengthening spiritual values, and structuring scientific thinking patterns in students. This is what makes differentiated assessment not only

relevant in the context of modern education but also fundamental in shaping a generation of well-rounded, visionary individuals.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) within the context of the Independent Curriculum requires an adaptive and reflective approach with a focus on developing 21<sup>st</sup>-century competencies, including critical thinking skills. This study demonstrates that differentiated assessment significantly strengthens the five critical thinking indicators identified by Ennis: clarification, basic support, inference, advanced argumentation, and self-regulation. Through differentiation in the learning process, content, and product, each student is allowed to develop a deeper, more creative, and more contextualized understanding, especially when interpreting PAI values. Differentiated assessment is more than just an assessment method; it has also proven effective as a means of internalizing moral, social, spiritual, and intellectual values in students. Thus, the critical thinking skills developed through this assessment support intellectual intelligence and shape students' personalities as perfect human beings. However, this study has several limitations. First, the data were obtained from only one Islamic Religious Education teacher at SMAN 7 Bandung, so they do not fully represent the diversity of practices and perspectives of teachers in other schools with different characteristics. Therefore, the results of this study require careful interpretation and cannot be generalized broadly. Future researchers are advised to expand the scope of the study by involving more teachers and schools from various educational levels. Incorporating student perspectives or using a quantitative approach could also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of differentiated assessment on critical thinking skill development in Islamic religious education. Thus, while this study provides important insights into the role of differentiated assessment as a holistic, transformative pedagogical approach, more research is needed to strengthen the empirical evidence and improve its implementation in modern Islamic education.

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