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AL-MUJADALAH AS A DIALOGICAL APPROACH IN NONFORMAL ISLAMIC EDUCATION: A POAC–SWOT CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This study examines how question-and-answer dialogue is organized at Baitul Qirom Majelis Taklim in Kesesi, Pekalongan, and how congregants' questions inform subsequent da'wah activities. A qualitative single-case study used written interview records from four purposively selected informants and observation notes collected during July–August 2026. The evidence was analyzed through thematic coding, the planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling functions, and a descriptive SWOT assessment. Findings show that organizers and the ustaz coordinate schedules and materials, distribute responsibilities informally, and provide a question-and-answer session after the teaching segment. Informants reported a limit of approximately four to five questions and the possibility of carrying unresolved questions into later meetings. A congregant valued direct clarification, although participation varied. Community contributions and volunteer support sustained activities, while limited discussion time and undocumented roles and evaluation constrained management. The evidence primarily establishes internal conditions; external opportunities and threats remain insufficiently documented. The study interprets dialogue as a potential feedback channel connecting religious learning with program planning. It does not establish that all normative dimensions of al-mujadalah were enacted or that dialogue caused improved learning outcomes. Simple records of questions, responsibilities, and follow-up are proposed to make the reported feedback process more traceable.

Keywords: Al-Mujadalah; Community Participation; Da'wah Management; Majelis Taklim; Nonformal Islamic Education.

INTRODUCTION

Majelis taklim provide community settings for Islamic learning, social interaction, and mutual assistance. Recent research connects their educational role with participatory governance, communication networks, and religious identity (Barus et al., 2025; Latif, 2026; Nafis, 2024). These functions shape congregants' opportunities to ask questions relevant to how learning is organized. A teaching program may be regular and well attended while leaving unclear how participants influence its content. Understanding that relationship requires attention to the exchanges through which religious concerns become inputs to subsequent activities.

Al-mujadalah billati hiya ahsan, associated with Qur'an 16:125, supplies an ethical perspective on religious discussion. A recent philosophical study connects this orientation with da'wah management (Al-Manduri, 2024), while research on egalitarian da'wah emphasizes dialogue and non-coercive relationships (Rejeki et

al., 2026). The foundational dialogic perspective of Kent & Taylor (2002) also draws attention to reciprocity and relational commitment. However, questions and answers alone do not demonstrate respectful disagreement, reasoned argumentation, or shared decision-making. These distinctions matter when describing a congregational learning activity as mujadalah-oriented dialogue.

Studies elsewhere show both organized learning arrangements and management functions that remain informal or undocumented (Manik & Nasrillah, 2026; Sayuti et al., 2024). A closer account of how a congregant's question becomes a future topic can clarify what participation means within such arrangements. Existing studies examine participatory institutional standards (Rawali et al., 2026), interactive communication on digital platforms (Santono et al., 2025), and discussion within a Pekalongan majelis taklim (Rosanti, 2024). They provide relevant comparisons but do not answer the specific process question at Baitul Qirom. This study therefore focuses on the relationship among question opportunities, reported topic selection, role allocation, and evaluation. Its contribution is a bounded explanation of this relationship, with a distinction between directly documented practices, informants' descriptions of later follow-up, and recommendations that have not been tested.

The study aims to explain how Baitul Qirom practices and manages dialogue and to identify the conditions that support or constrain it. It asks how planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling accommodate congregants' questions, and which internal and external conditions can be established from the available evidence. POAC and SWOT organized the analysis; they are not presented as new theories. The findings are intended to inform comparable community learning settings without claiming statistical generalization or a measured effect on religious understanding.

METHOD

This qualitative single-case study examined question-and-answer dialogue and its management at Baitul Qirom Majelis Taklim, Kesesi, Pekalongan Regency, Central Java. Data collection took place during July–August 2026. A case study was appropriate because the inquiry concerned a practice within its local organizational setting rather than its prevalence across institutions (Creswell & Poth, 2024). The unit of analysis was the management of congregational dialogue, including preparation, role allocation, implementation, and follow-up.

The researchers purposively selected four informants for their direct involvement and firsthand knowledge: the chairperson (W-TF), the ustaz or religious teacher (W-AN), the treasurer (W-DW), and a regular congregant (W-RP). Their roles provided complementary accounts of coordination, teaching, resources, and participation. Only one congregant was interviewed, and no young participant was included as an interview informant. Consequently, neither representativeness



nor data saturation is claimed. People assisting with activities were treated as observed participants, not additional interviewees.

Data comprised semi-structured interview records, observation notes, and the researcher's written documentation. The researcher used interview and observation guides addressing activity preparation, responsibilities, dialogue, community support, and evaluation. Interviews were documented in writing rather than through audio recording. The Indonesian question-and-answer records provide the basis for the translated quotations in this article; these are extracts from written records, not audio-verified verbatim transcripts. We labeled observation notes OBS-01 to OBS-06 by topic: routine sessions, interaction, roles, Islamic holiday activities, community participation, and evaluation. These six codes identify topics and do not imply six separate observation visits.

Analysis began by reading the interview and observation records and coding segments concerning question opportunities, deferred explanations, coordination, participation, funding, and evaluation. Related codes were compared across sources and grouped into interpretive themes. POAC then helped locate these patterns within management practices. This combination of data-led coding and framework-based organization is reported explicitly, rather than described as an entirely inductive reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2024). Quotations were selected to support an interpretation and retain the context of each speaker's account, following the reporting concerns discussed by Polat (2025). Agreement across sources was examined alongside differences, such as the distinction between an available question opportunity and unequal participation.

For the descriptive SWOT assessment, conditions substantially controlled by the majelis were classified as internal, while conditions outside its direct control were classified as external. A factor was included only where an interview or observation supported it. Categories without sufficient evidence were left unconfirmed. No factor weighting, IFAS/EFAS scoring, or tested strategy ranking was conducted. Proposed improvements therefore remain recommendations, not validated outcomes.

The researcher was also a congregant, which provided contextual familiarity but could influence interpretation. Source and technique comparisons were used to examine this influence; interpretations were kept distinct from reported statements and observed activities. Permission from the majelis leadership and oral consent from informants were obtained, as recorded in the study documentation. Informants are identified by role and code in the article. Initial member checking and audio verification were not conducted. No formal ethical approval was obtained; the applicable institutional review requirement remains to be confirmed before submission.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The evidence shows a structured opportunity for dialogue within routine religious teaching, supported by informal coordination and community assistance. Its clearest organizational feature is the reported use of congregants' questions when considering later material. The records also reveal limits: only some congregants ask questions, discussion time is bounded, and evaluation lacks a dedicated written instrument. The following account distinguishes what informants said from what observation notes establish. Planning begins with coordination between the chairperson and the ustaz. The chairperson described the sequence directly:

"Usually, before an activity, we coordinate with the ustaz first. We decide the day and time, and then the material to be delivered" (W-TF, translated from Indonesian).

This account places planning before the meeting, rather than treating the lecture and discussion as spontaneous. The coordination concerns the practical conditions under which the session can take place and the material to be discussed. The ustaz explained how participants' concerns enter this process:

"The material is adapted to the congregation's needs. Besides the material already prepared, I also consider questions or issues that arose at the previous meeting" (W-AN, translated from Indonesian).

He added:

"If a question requires a longer explanation or has not been discussed in depth, it can become material for a subsequent discussion" (W-AN, translated from Indonesian).

The chairperson similarly reported that unresolved or frequently raised questions could influence the next topic (W-TF). These accounts support the existence of an intended route from questions to later teaching. They do not establish how often such follow-up occurred, because the records do not trace individual questions across successive sessions. Scheduling also responds to congregants' circumstances. The chairperson stated:

"Routine activities are usually held after the Isha prayer until around nine at night. The timing is adapted to the congregation because most people have finished their own activities by then" (W-TF, translated from Indonesian).

OBS-01 records the same general period and a sequence of opening, teaching, questions and answers, and closing. Thus, the interviews explain the scheduling



rationale while the observation notes document the session arrangement. The material does not establish that work or family duties actually reduced attendance.

The chairperson, ustaz, and other helpers share responsibilities based on each activity's needs. The chairperson coordinates the program, while the ustaz teaches and helps decide on congregants' needs. Other participants support finances, refreshments, event facilitation, and technical arrangements (W-TF; OBS-03). The treasurer gave a concrete account:

"Usually, the women help. I coordinate what is needed for refreshments, and then the women help according to the needs of the activity" (W-DW, translated from Indonesian).

Her statement shows that interpersonal coordination, rather than incidental support, organizes material support. Written role definition is incomplete. The chairperson stated:

"Not everything has been formally written down. So far, it has mostly been based on established practices, the needs of the activity, and who can help" (W-TF, translated from Indonesian).

The treasurer also described duties as adjusted to activity needs and the people available (W-DW). The findings therefore establish informal role allocation, not the complete absence of an organizational structure. OBS-03 confirms assistance in running the event, but does not independently establish a particular person's responsibility for managing every question turn. The dialogue occurs after the teaching segment. The ustaz stated:

"After the material is finished, the congregation is given an opportunity to ask questions. Usually, there are around four to five questions so that there is still enough time" (W-AN, translated from Indonesian).

The chairperson described a similar limit and explained that it helps keep the event orderly (W-TF). OBS-01 corroborates a question-and-answer segment and a restriction on questions to keep the session within its allotted time. The specific estimate of four to five questions comes from the interviews; the observation record does not independently count them. Questions are not confined to the material delivered that evening. The ustaz reported that congregants may raise religious issues they encounter in everyday life, provided that the questions remain within the religious discussion (W-AN). He distinguished the purpose of the exchange from winning a dispute:

"The purpose is more to provide understanding and explain the issues raised by the congregation. It is not to argue or find out who wins" (W-AN, translated from Indonesian).

This statement establishes his stated educational orientation. It does not substitute for a detailed record of how he answered a disputed question, justified a

position, or responded to disagreement. The congregant's account provides a different perspective on the same opportunity. She explained:

"If there is something we do not understand, we can ask directly. Sometimes we encounter issues in everyday life and do not know the answer, so we can ask the ustaz" (W-RP, translated from Indonesian).

She also reported that questions allow her to seek clarification when listening alone leaves something unclear. This is evidence of a perceived benefit to the interviewed congregant. No pre- and post-session knowledge assessment was conducted, so it should not be read as a measured improvement in the congregation's religious understanding. An available question opportunity does not produce equal participation. The congregant stated:

"Not everyone does. Some ask questions, while others mostly listen. Perhaps it depends on their confidence or what they want to ask" (W-RP, translated from Indonesian).

Her explanation of confidence is a possibility raised by the informant, not a tested cause. The ustaz similarly noted:

"Not all congregants have the same confidence or ability to express a question. Some actively ask, while others mostly listen" (W-AN, translated from Indonesian).

OBS-02 records this variation in visible participation. Together, the sources establish unequal verbal involvement, without showing whether quieter participants had fewer questions, were reluctant to speak, or preferred to listen. Islamic holiday commemorations require wider coordination than routine sessions. The chairperson described joint discussion of the theme, speaker, schedule, event concept, and other needs (W-TF). He explained youth involvement as follows:

"Young people are given opportunities to help with activities, for example as an MC or on a committee. The aim is for them to gain experience and eventually help continue the activities" (W-TF, translated from Indonesian).

OBS-04 records young people's assistance with committee and event roles. The evidence supports involvement and an aspiration for continuity; it does not establish either a formal succession program or the absence of every form of cadre development. No young participant was interviewed about this experience. Figure 1 shows the congregation during a religious study session at Baitul Qirom Majelis Taklim.





Figure 1. A religious study session of Baitul Qirom *Majelis Taklim*

Source: Photograph supplied by the author.

Financial and practical support connect the program with community participation. The treasurer stated:

“So far, activity funds come from residents’ contributions and are used for the needs of the majelis activities” (W-DW, translated from Indonesian).

The chairperson clarified the implications for planning:

“Routine activities can still take place, but larger activities such as PHBI naturally need more funds. Funding therefore has to be considered when planning an activity” (W-TF, translated from Indonesian).

OBS-05 also records assistance with refreshments, information sharing, contributions, and activities. These sources show reliance on community resources and higher requirements for larger events. They do not show a quantified funding deficit or the cancellation of a program because money was unavailable.

Controlling takes the form of immediate attention to the event and informal discussion afterward. The chairperson stated:

“There is no specific written evaluation system yet. It is mostly through communication and direct observation” (W-TF, translated from Indonesian).

He identified timing, the flow of the event, organizers’ readiness, and congregants’ responses as matters monitored during implementation. OBS-06 records informal evaluation and the absence of a dedicated written instrument in the observed activities. This supports a distinction between evaluation taking place and evaluation being systematically recorded. It does not justify saying that the majelis never evaluates its programs. Table 1 summarizes the evidence within the four

management functions. The table makes the links among planning, implementation, and review visible while retaining the different evidential roles of interviews and observations.

Table 1. Management functions and the evidence for congregational dialogue

Function	Established practice	Sources
Planning	Chairperson–ustaz coordination; questions considered for later material; evening schedule	W-TF; W-AN; OBS-01 for schedule
Organizing	Coordination of teaching, finances, refreshments, and event roles; incomplete written task allocation	W-TF; W-DW; OBS-03
Actuating	Questions after teaching; direct clarification; unequal verbal participation	W-AN; W-RP; OBS-01; OBS-02
Controlling	Monitoring of time and activity flow; informal evaluation; no dedicated written instrument observed	W-TF; OBS-06

The descriptive SWOT assessment is more limited than a complete strategic diagnosis based on Table 2. It establishes internal supporting conditions and constraints. It does not identify external competition from digital preaching, attendance changes driven by occupational demands, or available partnerships. Existing community help shows current support; it should not automatically count as proof of future opportunities. Leaving these categories unconfirmed prevents plausible assumptions from becoming reported field findings.

Table 2. Evidence boundaries in the descriptive SWOT assessment

Category	Evidence-based assessment	Sources
Strengths	Chairperson–ustaz coordination; a regular question opportunity; community contributions and practical assistance	W-TF; W-AN; W-DW; W-RP; OBS-01; OBS-05
Weaknesses or constraints	Incomplete written responsibilities; informal evaluation records; limited discussion time; greater funding needs for larger events	W-TF; W-AN; W-DW; OBS-06
Opportunities	No specific external opportunity is sufficiently documented to classify as an established finding	Not established
Threats	No specific external threat is sufficiently documented to classify as an established finding	Not established

Across these findings, dialogue has two supported roles: immediate clarification during a session and a reported contribution to later topic selection. The first is



described by the ustaz and congregant and supported by observation. The second rests on the accounts of the chairperson and ustaz. The study contributes by distinguishing these roles and the organizational conditions surrounding them, rather than assuming every question is followed up or that all participants influence the program equally.

DISCUSSION

The case supports an al-mujadalah perspective on dialogue with a clear limit on the claim. The ustaz describes clarification, not victory, as his purpose, and the observations show reciprocal questions and answers. Recent work connects Qur'anic da'wah methods with management and emphasizes an egalitarian orientation (Al-Manduri, 2024; Rejeki et al., 2026). However, neither a stated intention nor a photograph can establish the consistent quality of reasoning, courtesy, or responses to disagreement. These aspects require detailed interaction records. The present findings therefore describe a dialogue-oriented practice; they do not equate every question-and-answer exchange with the full normative practice of al-mujadalah.

The distinctive organizational link is the reported consideration of questions when planning later topics. Research at Al-Huda identifies attention to learners' needs and age-specific teaching arrangements (Sayuti et al., 2024), while the Boyolali study identifies a need to improve the organization of teaching material and institutional management ('Aliyah & Senja, 2024). Baitul Qirom adds a specific process to this comparison: unfinished questions can provide material for a subsequent meeting. In the relational terms of Kent & Taylor (2002), this offers a possible route for participants' input to influence communication beyond a single response. Calling it a feedback channel remains an interpretation, because the study did not track a named question through to its later resolution.

This interpretation is consistent with broader work on participatory governance, but it should not be overstated. Barus et al. (2025) distinguish open and more centralized governance across *majelis taklim*, and Rawali et al. (2026) link participatory communication with institutional standards and organizational capacity. At Baitul Qirom, congregants can affect topic consideration through questions, yet the chairperson and ustaz retain their coordinating and teaching roles. The data do not show collective control over all program decisions. Therefore, raising a concern is a specific form of participation, not evidence that the entire institution operates with equal decision-making authority.

The question limit illustrates a practical tension between access and time. It gives discussion a defined place in the program while limiting how much can be explored in one evening. Studies of discussion in Wonopringgo and interactive digital preaching likewise draw attention to participants' active contributions, although their settings and communication arrangements differ (Rosanti, 2024; Santono et al., 2025). The comparison does not imply that Baitul Qirom uses digital

platforms. Here, the important issue is how deferred questions are handled. A brief question log could help distinguish a question merely postponed from one actually revisited; its value would need to be assessed after implementation.

Unequal verbal participation qualifies any claim that dialogue benefits everyone in the same way. The congregant values direct clarification, but both her account and OBS-02 indicate that some people mainly listen. Research at Asy-Syaidah links group communication and social support with participation, while the Hawariyyun and Jami'atul Khairiyah studies describe different managerial approaches to encouraging involvement (Choiriyati et al., 2025; Miharsa & Yulia, 2026; Panjaitan & Surya, 2024). These comparisons suggest questions for future inquiry about quieter members. They do not establish why individual Baitul Qirom congregants remain silent. Options such as written questions could be offered and evaluated without assuming that speaking publicly is the only meaningful form of engagement.

The distinction between access to an explanation and its intellectual quality also deserves attention. Research on fiqh reference patterns in Central Kalimantan shows that religious teaching involves different approaches to selecting and using sources (Helim et al., 2024). This makes it necessary to examine how answers are justified, rather than infer their quality from the presence of a teacher or an interactive format. Similarly, the Al Bayan study addresses interactive and inclusive strategies in relation to religious moderation (Akmala & Muktaruddin, 2024). Baitul Qirom's data contain no systematic comparison of competing interpretations or measured moderation outcomes. Its contribution concerns the organization of opportunities for clarification, not proof of changes in religious attitudes.

Community assistance supports these opportunities materially. The interviews describe voluntary contributions and coordinated refreshments, while the observations record wider practical involvement. Studies of da'wah management in Sukamaju and at Miftahul Jannah relate religious activities to community cooperation and social relationships (Ghani et al., 2025; Manurung & Faridah, 2026). The present case identifies the concrete contributions that help meetings run. It does not establish a comparable effect on empowerment or family harmony. Funding dependence also needs careful interpretation: contributions sustain routine activities, while larger events create additional demands. Financial vulnerability should be assessed from records of income, expenditure, and unmet needs rather than assumed from the funding source alone.

Youth assistance indicates a possible route toward organizational continuity. Research on youth-led nonformal education discusses the practical and sustainability issues involved in young people's participation (Choir & Aziz, 2024). A recent study of management functions at Al-Aman also identifies human-resource and youth-involvement constraints in its own setting (Tambunan et al., 2026). At Baitul Qirom, the chairperson wants young helpers to gain experience, but the study lacks their accounts and a record of their increasing responsibilities. A



proportionate next step is to document existing roles and invite young participants to describe what support they need. Their occasional involvement should neither be dismissed nor presented as an established succession system.

Informal evaluation is the main administrative limit documented across the case. Management research in Tigalingga similarly reports undocumented planning and informal organizational practices (Manik & Nasrillah, 2026). Baitul Qirom nevertheless shows active monitoring of time, readiness, and congregants' responses. The issue is whether these judgments can be revisited and used consistently. A short record linking the session topic, questions raised, unresolved issues, assigned follow-up, and the next discussion would make the reported relationship between dialogue and planning more visible. This recommendation develops from the evidence; it has not been implemented or shown to improve outcomes in the present study.

The findings must also remain distinct from studies that assess broader participant outcomes. Work on Indonesian migrant workers' *pengajian* emphasizes religious engagement and communication networks (Nafis, 2024). Other research investigates religious identity, social cohesion, or associations involving psychological well-being (Latif, 2026; Nuruddaroini et al., 2024). Those studies use different questions, settings, or measurements. This case contains no basis for a causal claim about learning, well-being, attendance growth, or social cohesion. Its narrower explanation concerns how a local institution makes space for questions and reportedly connects them to subsequent teaching.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that *al-mujadalah* at Baitul Qirom Majelis Taklim is a dialogue-oriented approach to nonformal Islamic education, in which congregants' questions can link learning experiences to subsequent educational planning. Through the POAC framework, dialogue is shown to be embedded in the broader management of religious learning, while the SWOT assessment highlights the importance of organizational capacity in sustaining participatory activities. Nevertheless, the extent to which this practice fully reflects the ethical and dialogical principles of *al-mujadalah* remains to be examined more closely. The study suggests that the educational value of dialogue depends not only on opportunities to ask questions but also on how participants' concerns are accommodated, followed up, and incorporated into ongoing learning processes.

Future research should address the limitations of this single-case study by involving a wider range of participants, including younger congregants and individuals who participate less actively in verbal discussions, and by examining multiple majelis taklim settings to enable contextual comparison. Longitudinal observations and audio-recorded interviews, with appropriate informed consent and ethical approval, could provide more detailed evidence of how questions are

raised, addressed, and followed up across successive sessions. Further studies should also examine the quality of dialogical interactions, including respectful disagreement, reasoning, reciprocity, and inclusiveness, rather than relying solely on the availability of question-and-answer sessions. In addition, documenting organizational responsibilities, evaluation practices, and evidence-based external opportunities and threats would strengthen the application of POAC and SWOT. These approaches could help determine whether dialogical practices contribute to more inclusive participation and meaningful learning experiences without presuming causal effects in advance.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

MKZE: Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data curation, and writing of the original draft. HA: Supervision, formal analysis, validation, and review and editing. Both authors are responsible for reviewing the interpretation of the findings and the manuscript before submission.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

DECLARATION OF AI

The authors used artificial intelligence (AI) tools, specifically ChatGPT by OpenAI, to assist with academic language editing, drafting, and refinement of selected manuscript sections, including the abstract, discussion, conclusion, and supplementary statements. The tool served as a writing aid, not a substitute for the authors' research, data collection, or analysis. The authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, and final content of the manuscript and for verifying all references and research claims.

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