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From Knowledge to Practice: Differentiated Instruction in Arabic Language Teaching at Madrasah Tsanawiyah

Fauzana Annova^{1*}, Sri Indah Lestari², Nuha Mariyatul Qibthiyah³, Mustika Wijayanti⁴, Noor Ain Isnaini⁵

^{1,2,5} Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang, Indonesia

³ Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

⁴ Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia

Correspondence: E-mail: fauzanaannova@uinib.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the conceptual knowledge and implementation of Differentiated Instruction (DI) practices in Arabic language teaching by 18 teachers at junior high schools in West Sumatra, Indonesia. Using a convergent mixed-methods survey design, this study examines two core dimensions: (1) conceptual understanding of DI principles for adapting content, process, product, and learning environment; and (2) classroom implementation practices, including strategies, challenges, and contextual factors that influence the teaching of *maharah arba'ah* (listening, speaking, reading, writing). Findings indicate that strong theoretical understanding has not yet been fully translated into consistent instructional practice. Among the measured dimensions, based on a 5-point Likert scale, teachers reported the highest mean score for the perceived importance of differentiated instruction ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.52$). In contrast, perceived barriers received the lowest mean score ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 0.95$) means it is not barrier-free, but barriers are high. Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of Arabic language learning through a differentiated approach need to focus on strengthening structural aspects: continuous and contextual professional development, provision of adequate resources, reduction of administrative burden, and strengthening of institutional support systems.

1. INTRODUCTION

Differentiated learning in Arabic language teaching faces a fundamental paradox: although it has been proven to significantly improve learning outcomes ($gRE = 1.109$, $p < 0.01$) (Am et al., 2023), its implementation experiences chronic inconsistencies that threaten the achievement of educational equity. The complexity of mastering the four Arabic language skills requires an adaptive pedagogical response to address student heterogeneity (Zikriah, 2022). Consequently, teachers must possess both conceptual knowledge and practical competencies to adapt content, processes, products, and learning environments effectively (Nketsia et al., 2024).

This exploratory study aims to provide an initial understanding of Arabic teachers' conceptual knowledge and implementation of Differentiated Instruction (DI) in the context of junior high madrasahs in West Sumatra. Differentiated Instruction (DI) is a student-centered instructional approach that adapts four core, interrelated elements: content, process, product, and learning environment, according to students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles (Langelaan et al., 2024; Laila Laila et al., 2024). Content refers to what students learn, process to how they engage with learning activities, product to how they demonstrate learning, and learning environment to the physical and psychological conditions that support learning. These four elements constitute the conceptual foundation of DI and serve as the framework for examining teachers' knowledge and classroom implementation in this study.

Teachers' knowledge of differentiated learning is an important prerequisite for effective practice (Moosa, 2019). However, the gap between conceptual understanding and consistent instructional practice is a fundamental obstacle, exacerbated by deficits in pedagogical competence, a lack of continuous professional development, accountability pressures, and unfavorable structural conditions (Nurbayan et al., 2024). Bibliometric investigations confirm that teacher self-efficacy is positively correlated with the frequency of differentiation practices, which is predicted by the clarity of teachers' understanding of student characteristics (Salsabila et al., 2020), while novice teachers systematically experience cognitive overload in facing the complexity of differentiation due to variable school support and multidimensional challenges that have not been addressed in teacher education programs (Arfandi, 2020). This pedagogical irony, where differentiated learning designed to accommodate diversity is actually hampered by teacher capacity and systemic constraints, underscores the urgency of a comprehensive investigation into the knowledge and implementation of differentiated learning by Arabic teachers in *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (Islamic junior high schools) to prevent the persistence of educational disparities.

A synthesis of the literature review reveals three epistemological blind spots that legitimize the urgency of this research. First, Differentiated Instruction (DI) has been proven effective in increasing student engagement and achievement, as stated by Goyibova in 2025, while its application in Islamic education systems, including Indonesian *Madrasah Tsanawiyah*, is still terra incognita (Goyibova et al., 2025). This gap is compounded by the fact that curriculum reforms in Indonesian madrasahs such as the shift from KMA Decree No. 183/2019 to No. 347/2022 have increasingly decentralized instructional design to teachers without

corresponding structured guidance on differentiation practices (Rifa'i et al., 2025).

Second, limitations in learning technology training, assessment skill deficits, and a lack of adaptive resources require a contextual approach to differentiated instruction. This concern is reinforced by the scarcity of empirical attention to the topic at the international level: a systematic literature review of Scopus-indexed publications on Arabic language teaching found only 21 relevant articles published between 2008 and 2023, with the majority focusing on general teaching methodologies and teacher competencies rather than differentiated instruction specifically, and none addressing assessment and evaluation practices in this context (Zikriah & Mauludiyah, 2024).

Third, it identifies the gap between teachers' conceptual understanding and their implementation skills as a critical barrier to differentiated instruction (DI). This issue remains underexplored in the context of Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Meanwhile, the OECD (Yip et al., 2026) in its report *Equity and Inclusion in Education* focuses more on curriculum reform and quality management without touching on the simultaneous assessment of teachers' theoretical knowledge and practical implementation (Meutstege & Geel, 2023). Thus, this study aims to bridge this gap: expanding the application of Tomlinson's theory to the unexplored context of Islamic education in Indonesia, while providing an empirical evidence base for the development of Arabic teacher programs in Islamic junior high schools that are responsive to student heterogeneity (Nketsia et al., 2025).

Responding to this challenge, this study investigates how 18 Arabic language teachers from 12 Madrasah Tsanawiyah in West Sumatra understand and implement differentiated instruction within a unique socio-religious context. By placing Tomlinson's DI theoretical framework (Tomlinson, 2017) within the Indonesian Islamic education ecosystem, this study expands the horizon of differentiation pedagogy, which has been overlooked in global literature (Maulinda, 2022). The research objectives focus on two main aspects. First, to identify the level of Arabic language teachers' knowledge of differentiated learning principles and strategies, particularly in adapting content, processes, products, and learning environments (Kiswanto et al., 2023). Second, to describe the actual implementation of differentiated learning in the classroom, including the variety of pedagogical strategies used, as well as the challenges that arise when teachers adapt learning to students' differences in listening, speaking, reading, and writing Arabic (Furoidah, 2020). This research also links these two aspects to contextual factors such as self-efficacy, teaching experience, and institutional support (Arfandi, 2020). Theoretically, this study enriches the global understanding of differentiated learning in a multilingual environment based on religious values. Practically, the results are expected to provide an empirical basis for the development of teacher training that is responsive to the complexities of Arabic language pedagogy.

This study is based on the assumption that the application of Differentiated Instruction (DI) in Arabic language teaching in Madrasah Tsanawiyah cannot simply be replicated linearly from the developed model (Onwubuya, 2025), but requires epistemological and pedagogical adaptations that are in line with Islamic values and the multilingual characteristics of students (Feng et al., 2025; Jufrianto & Basri, 2025). This assumption also opens up space to review the

findings of previous studies that tend to highlight the limitations of Madrasah Tsanawiyah teachers' capacity to implement differentiated learning, mainly due to constraints in resources and competence (Zuhaery et al., 2025).

Within this framework, this study posits that although teachers' formal knowledge of DI principles varies, differentiation practices have the potential to grow organically through teaching experience, local wisdom, and sensitivity to classroom dynamics (Geel et al., 2022). In this way, the main contribution of this study is directed at efforts to recontextualize DI theory into a more flexible and contextual pedagogical model for Islamic education, while offering the perspective that the success of differentiated learning is not only determined by teachers' conceptual mastery, but also by their ability to navigate structural limitations and integrate spiritual values into daily instructional practices in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (Liang et al., 2025).

2. METHODS

This study uses a descriptive survey design with a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques.

Research Design

This exploratory study employed a descriptive survey design within a convergent mixed-methods framework to explore Arabic language teachers' knowledge and implementation of differentiated instruction in West Sumatra (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). A descriptive survey approach was selected to systematically describe the current level of knowledge among Arabic language instructors and how they apply differentiated instruction in the classroom. At the same time, the mixed-methods design enabled the study to capture both quantifiable facets of instructors' expertise and a more in-depth understanding of their opinions and experiences (Ade Sintia Wulandari, 2022).

The study followed a convergent mixed-methods design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and analyzed separately before being integrated during the interpretation stage (Manion & Morrison, 2018; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design enables a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon by combining statistical trends with participants' explanations and experiences.

Participants

Arabic language instructors at Madrasah Tsanawiyah in the Indonesian province of West Sumatra participated in this study. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants based on standards pertinent to the study's goals. The requirements for inclusion were (1) being employed as an Arabic language instructor, (2) teaching at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level (Dawadi & Giri, 2021).

This study involved 18 Arabic language instructors from 12 Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Given the relatively small and purposively selected sample, the findings are intended to provide an exploratory understanding of differentiated instruction practices in the West Sumatra context rather than statistical generalizations to the wider population of Arabic language teachers. Of these establishments, three were private Madrasah Tsanawiyah (16.7%) and nine were public Madrasah Tsanawiyah (83.3%). Pariaman City, Padang Pariaman Regency, Agam Regency,

Padang City, and Lima Puluh Kota Regency were among the West Sumatra districts and cities where the schools were situated.

Instruments

An online survey questionnaire created with Google Forms served as the main tool for gathering data (Handoko et al., 2021). The questionnaire was created to assess two primary aspects: (1) the application of differentiated learning techniques in Arabic language instruction, and (2) instructors' understanding of differentiated learning principles and strategies.

Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were included in the survey. The closed-ended items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Conceptual understanding, importance, implementation ability, environmental support, and barrier-free were the five dimensions measured using Likert-scale items. In the meantime, the open-ended questions examined the experiences, difficulties, tactics, and recommendations of teachers in putting differentiated instruction into practice (Suni Astini, 2020).

The questionnaire items were tailored to the context of teaching Arabic in Islamic educational institutions and were created using well-established theoretical frameworks for differentiated learning. Before the instrument was used, two validators with knowledge in Arabic language instruction and educational methodology conducted an expert evaluation to ensure content validity.

In addition to this content validity assessment, the empirical validity and reliability of the instrument were examined based on data obtained from the respondents (N = 18, representing approximately 30% of the total population of 60 Arabic language teachers in the research setting). Empirical validity was tested using the corrected item-total (Pearson product-moment) correlation across the instrument's five dimensions: Conceptual Understanding, Importance, Implementation Ability, Environmental Support, and Barrier-Free, with items considered valid if their r-value exceeded the r-table threshold at the 5% significance level. As presented in Table 1, the majority of items met this criterion, with r-values ranging from 0.449 to 0.833. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded coefficients ranging from 0.633 to 0.817 across the five dimensions, indicating adequate to high internal consistency ($\alpha \geq 0.60$). It should be noted that this sample size falls below the threshold typically recommended in the psychometric literature (24–30 respondents), primarily due to constraints in accessing additional respondents within the study's timeframe; nevertheless, given that it represents a substantial proportion of the accessible population, the results are considered reasonably representative, and future research is encouraged to confirm these findings using a larger sample.

Table 1. Empirical Validity Test Results (Pearson) and Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)

Dimension	Item	r-count	Status	Alpha (α)
Conceptual Understanding	1	0.660	Valid	0.633
	4	0.062	Invalid	
	5	0.753	Valid	
Importance	2	0.717	Valid	0.817

Implementation Ability	3	0.717	Valid	0.732
	6	0.632	Valid	
	7	0.415	Invalid	
	8	0.833	Valid	
	9	0.370	Invalid	
Environmental Support	10	0.076	Invalid	0.681
	11	0.449	Invalid	
	12	0.505	Valid	
	13	0.583	Valid	
	14	0.591	Valid	
	15	0.464	Invalid	
Barrier-Free	16	0.490	Valid	0.809
	17	0.628	Valid	
	18	0.596	Valid	
	19	0.673	Valid	
	20	0.597	Valid	

Note: $r\text{-table} = 0.482$ ($df = 15$) for the Conceptual Understanding and Importance dimensions; $r\text{-table} = 0.468$ ($df = 16$) for the other three dimensions, at a significance level of 5%.

Data Collection Procedure

An online survey utilizing Google Forms was used to gather data from Arabic language instructors. Participants were sent the survey link via educational communication groups and professional teacher networks (Nurhaliza et al., 2020). After indicating that they were willing to take part in the study, participants willingly filled out the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical methods, such as frequency distributions, percentages, and measures of central tendency (mean scores), were used to assess quantitative data from the closed-ended questions. Tables and graphical representations of the results were used to show trends in instructors' implementation strategies and expertise.

The six steps of thematic analysis data familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and report production were used to examine qualitative data from open-ended responses (Braun et al., 2025). Through this technique, the researcher was able to pinpoint important themes pertaining to instructors' experiences, difficulties, and methods for putting differentiated instruction into practice. In order to provide a thorough grasp of the knowledge and application of differentiated learning in Arabic language instruction, the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was carried out during the interpretation stage.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical guidelines for educational research, such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and data protection, were followed in this study. Respondents' identities were kept private during the entire research procedure, and participation in the study was entirely voluntary.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Form of Code-Switching in Arabic Learning

Descriptive analysis of the survey questionnaire (N = 18) yielded an overall mean of 3.52 (SD = 0.74) on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating teachers' positive perceptions of differentiated learning. Although teachers demonstrated high conceptual understanding and recognized the importance of differentiated instruction, classroom implementation remained relatively lower. This finding indicates that strong theoretical understanding has not yet been fully translated into consistent instructional practice. Among the measured dimensions, teachers reported the highest mean score for the perceived importance of differentiated instruction (M = 4.15, SD = 0.52). In contrast, perceived barriers received the lowest mean score (M = 2.05, SD = 0.95), meaning it is not barrier-free, but barriers are high.

The following table shows the distribution of teachers' perceptions of differentiated learning:

Table 2. Teachers' Knowledge and Application of Differentiated Instruction

Aspect	Mean	SD	Category
Conceptual Understanding	3.98	0.65	Positive
Importance	4.15	0.52	Very Positive
Implementation Capability	3.74	0.78	Positive
Environmental Support	3.70	0.82	Positive
Barrier-Free	2.05	0.95	Low
Overall Average	3.52	0.74	Positive

The distribution of scores in Table 2 shows a pattern that is not entirely symmetrical, indicating an imbalance between the cognitive-affective dimension and the practical-operational dimension in teachers' perceptions of differentiated learning. The aspect of importance received the highest score (M = 4.15; SD = 0.52), confirming teachers' high conceptual awareness and appreciation of the relevance of this approach in the context of 21st-century learning. Conversely, the aspect of Freedom from Barriers showed the lowest score (M = 2.05; SD = 0.95), indicating structural and technical barriers in its implementation in the field.

Teachers' Knowledge of DI Principles and Strategies

The majority of teachers (77.8%, $n = 14$) understood the basic concepts of DI well (score ≥ 4). A total of 88.9% ($n = 16$) were able to distinguish DI from traditional learning, and 83.3% ($n = 15$) mastered the objectives of DI implementation. The Concept Understanding Score ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.65$) reflects a strong cognitive foundation.

Implementation of Differentiated Learning Practices

In terms of implementation ability ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.78$), 66.7% ($n = 12$) of participants felt capable of designing activities according to student needs, while 83.3% ($n = 15$) applied flexible evaluation. Meanwhile, environmental support scored a mean of 3.70 ($SD = 0.82$), with the highest support coming from Islamic junior high school (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) leadership ($M = 4.22$) and the lowest for regular training ($M = 3.17$). Finally, the barrier-free dimension received a mean score of 2.05 ($SD = 0.95$), showing that time, resource, and administrative constraints were dominant.

To provide a comprehensive description of teachers' perception profiles, the quantitative data were visualized using a five-axis radar chart (Figure 1). The visualization reveals an asymmetric configuration, characterized by the highest mean score on the Importance dimension ($M = 4.15$) and the lowest mean score on the Barrier-Free dimension ($M = 2.05$), indicating a high level of perceived barriers. This visual pattern illustrates a pronounced gap between teachers' recognition of the importance of differentiated instruction and the substantial obstacles they encounter in its implementation. The imbalance in the pentagonal shape represents a paradox. While teachers possess strong conceptual awareness and acknowledge the importance of differentiated instruction, they continue to face significant practical constraints in implementing it effectively in classroom practice.

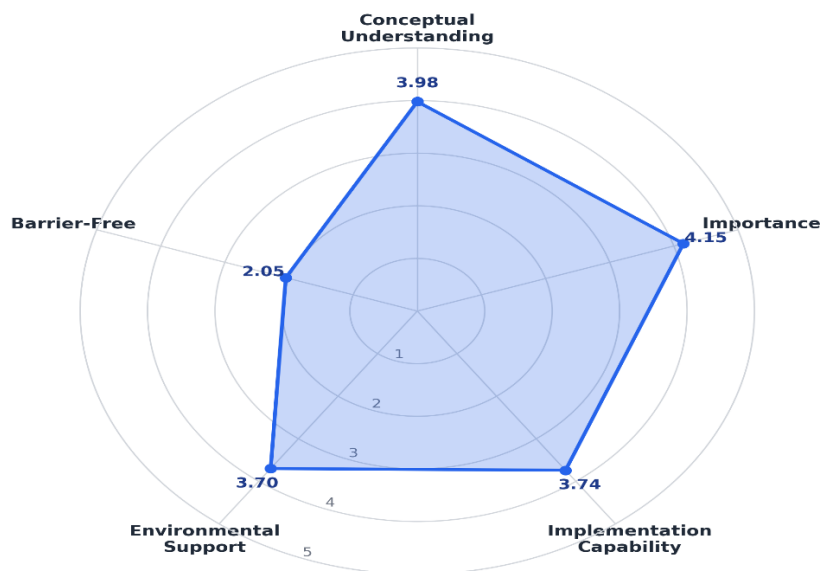


Figure 1. Radar Pentagon of Teacher Knowledge and Differentiated Learning Implementation

The fluctuating pattern depicted in the pentagon diagram indicates that even though teachers have adequate mental preparedness and conceptual understanding of differentiated learning, the transition process from the theoretical realm to practical implementation still faces various systemic challenges. This condition indicates the need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to support the sustainability of differentiated learning practices in the operational context of schools.

Qualitative Findings (Thematic Analysis)

Thematic analysis of open-ended questions identified five main themes that were consistent with the quantitative findings:

Theory-Practice Gap: "Differentiated learning... is constrained by large class sizes, busy teaching hours, and minimal facilities" (Respondents 1, 4, 7, 12, 18). Respondents stated that the implementation of differentiated learning in Madrasah Tsanawiyah has not been optimal due to large class sizes, crowded teaching hours, minimal facilities and infrastructure, orientation towards exams, and low student motivation to learn.

Need for Continuous Training: "Please provide continuous training... specifically for Arabic language teachers." Several respondents explicitly expressed the need for more intensive, targeted, and continuous training programs related to the implementation of differentiated learning. The following statement represents the views of the majority of teachers: "It is hoped that the institutions responsible for developing educator competencies can organize continuous training for teachers on the implementation of differentiated learning."

Time/Administrative Constraints: "Teachers have a lot of administrative work, not enough time." The operational obstacles that arise are specific, mainly related to time constraints and the high administrative burden that teachers must carry out. Several respondents expressed similar complaints about these conditions, as stated: "The implementation of differentiated learning is actually very good, but the current administrative burden on teachers is quite heavy, so there is not enough time to prepare teaching materials." This data illustrates the administrative work pressure that has an impact on the limited time available for optimal planning and implementation of differentiated learning.

Specific Arabic Language Resources: "DI guidelines for audio/visual/kinesthetic... Arabic language laboratories." The need for specific learning resources for Arabic language subjects emerged as one of the main issues identified in the participants' open-ended questionnaire responses. Respondents conveyed the importance of the availability of differentiated learning guides compiled based on the auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning styles of students and relevant to Arabic language material at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level. In addition, teachers also emphasized the need for supporting facilities such as language laboratories and contextual guidebooks to support the effective implementation of differentiated learning in this subject.

Technological Competence: Respondents indicated that their knowledge of developing technology-based learning media was still limited. They believed that greater competence in designing digital learning media would facilitate the implementation of differentiated instruction.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that Arabic language teachers have a strong conceptual understanding of the principles of Differentiated Instruction (DI) with an average Conceptual Understanding score of $M = 3.98$ ($SD = 0.65$), reflecting a positive level of understanding. Specifically, 88.9% of teachers were able to distinguish differentiated instruction from traditional teaching approaches, indicating a high level of conceptual understanding. This study reveals that Arabic teachers in Madrasah Tsanawiyah have a solid foundation of knowledge about differentiated learning. High scores on the dimensions of conceptual understanding ($M = 3.98$) and the importance of differentiated learning ($M = 4.15$) indicate that teachers have internalized the fundamental principles of differentiated pedagogy as conceptualized by Tomlinson (2017; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023), who defines this approach as a teaching method that adapts content, process, products, and learning environments based on the diverse needs of students. Teachers' belief that differentiated learning is important for improving learning outcomes (score of 4.15) is supported by empirical evidence from a meta-analysis by AM et al. (2023), which found a significant positive effect ($gRE = 1.109$, $p < 0.01$) on student learning outcomes. Moosa, V.(2019) also found a significant correlation between teachers' understanding of differentiated learning and the quality of its implementation, confirming that knowledge is an important prerequisite for effective practice.

The findings reveal a clear discrepancy between teachers' implementation capability and the barrier dimension. This gap reflects the differentiation paradox: teachers recognize the importance of differentiated instruction and report being capable of implementing it, yet they continue to encounter substantial obstacles that make its implementation difficult in everyday classroom practice. Although the concept of differentiated learning is well known among teachers, many find it difficult to translate it into everyday classroom practice. Effective implementation of differentiated learning requires not only knowledge, but also integrated practical skills and positive attitudes.

The implementation challenges faced by Arabic teachers in this study reflect universal patterns documented in the international literature. Specifically, three main challenges identified in the literature include limited school resources, student behavior problems, and insufficient time for planning (Gibbs, 2023). Similarly, the successful implementation of innovative instructional models in Arabic learning within Islamic education institutions in Indonesia depends heavily on adequate technological readiness and structured pedagogical planning, reinforcing the pattern observed in this study (Sarip et al., 2024). A recent systematic review examining the implementation of differentiated learning in rural schools also confirmed four categories of challenges: time and planning, resources and materials, institutional support, and student management (Saigar & Jamaludin, 2025). Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of these challenges greatly influence their willingness and ability to implement differentiation strategies consistently (Yuen et al., 2023). A related study of Australian senior-secondary teachers likewise found that unclear school leadership and policy direction constrain consistent differentiated instruction, even among teachers who conceptually endorse the approach (Porta et al., 2024).

The routine training score of only 3.17 is a critical finding that demands serious attention. Langelaan, Gaikhorst, Smets, and Oostdam, in their comprehensive review in *Teaching and Teacher Education*, which synthesized 29 journal articles, found that successful professional development programs have specific characteristics: they incorporate active learning, encourage collaboration among teachers, facilitate reflection on practice, are longitudinal and comprehensive, and address attitudes, knowledge, and skills simultaneously (Langelaan et al., 2024). Respondent 6's complaint about the lack of access to mentors who understand Arabic underscores the importance of professional development contextualized to specific subjects. Milinga, Amani, and Lyakurwa also identified that some teachers' reluctance to adopt differentiated pedagogy often stems from inadequate preparation and professional support (Meutstege & Geel, 2023). This is consistent with recent evidence that teacher self-efficacy and enthusiasm are essential prerequisites for sustained differentiated instruction, particularly in translating conceptual mastery into consistent classroom practice (Kalinowski et al., 2024).

Teachers' explicit requests for guidance on differentiated learning and Arabic language laboratories reflect a resource gap that requires a policy response. Grecu found in his study that although standardized curricula take student diversity into account, effective implementation requires adequate supporting resources and careful differentiation planning (Grecu, 2022). (Moosa, 2019) emphasizes the importance of the availability of materials that support the differentiation of learning content, processes, and products. This is consistent with (Syarifuddin et al., 2025), who demonstrated that the development of contextual, need-based Arabic teaching materials significantly improves the relevance and effectiveness of instruction in similar settings.

High scores for Madrasah Tsanawiyah leadership support (4.22) are a positive asset that needs to be optimized. Osae and Papadopoulos emphasize that institutional support and teacher readiness are two interrelated factors in the successful implementation of differentiated learning (Osae & Papadopoulos, 2024). This is corroborated by evidence that principal instructional leadership fosters differentiated instruction indirectly through teacher collaboration and self-efficacy (Hammad et al., 2024). However, leadership support alone is not enough without other structural interventions. Narayanan et al. (2024), in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, highlight that teacher autonomy in implementing differentiated learning needs to be supported by conducive institutional policies, including reducing administrative burdens and providing adequate time. The equity impact of differentiated learning depends on effective implementation, which requires systemic support from various institutional levels (Langelaan et al., 2024).

The convergence between quantitative and qualitative findings in this study shows high consistency and reinforces the validity of the research results. The pattern found where teachers demonstrate strong knowledge but face significant implementation barriers confirms that the necessary intervention is not in the aspect of knowledge, but in the structural and systemic aspects. The practical implications include five key recommendations: first, the development of continuous training programs specifically for Arabic teachers with an active and

collaborative learning approach; second, the preparation of Arabic-specific differentiated learning modules and guidelines that accommodate various learning styles; third, reviewing and reducing teachers' administrative workload to provide adequate planning time; fourth, establishing a mentorship network among Arabic teachers to facilitate the sharing of best practices; and fifth, investing in infrastructure in the form of Arabic language laboratories and learning support technology.

Overall, the findings of this study broaden the understanding of the "differentiation paradox" in the context of Arabic language teaching in Indonesian Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Arabic teachers in Madrasah Tsanawiyah have adequate intellectual capital, strong conceptual knowledge, and high awareness of the importance of differentiated learning for educational equity but face structural constraints that hinder the actualization of this knowledge in practice. Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of Arabic language learning through differentiated approaches need to focus on strengthening structural aspects: continuous and contextual professional development, provision of adequate resources, reduction of administrative burdens, and strengthening of institutional support systems. With targeted interventions in these aspects, the great potential of teachers can be actualized to realize Arabic language learning that is responsive to the diverse needs of students in Madrasah Tsanawiyah.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Arabic language teachers at Madrasah Tsanawiyah in West Sumatra demonstrate a strong conceptual understanding of Differentiated Instruction and recognize its importance for addressing students' diverse learning needs. However, this understanding has not yet been fully translated into consistent classroom practice because of administrative demands, limited instructional resources, and insufficient opportunities for continuous professional development. The findings demonstrate the importance of strengthening institutional support and providing contextual professional development to enhance teachers' capacity to implement differentiated instruction in Arabic language classrooms. Theoretically, this study contributes to the application of Tomlinson's Differentiated Instruction framework within the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. Practically, the findings provide an empirical basis for developing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs that strengthen differentiated instructional practices in Arabic language teaching. Future studies are recommended to examine the effectiveness of such interventions across broader Madrasah Tsanawiyah contexts in Indonesia.

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