

Management of Arabic Language Teacher Competency Improvement in Islamic Boarding Schools: Strategic Analysis of Learning Quality

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyse the management of Arabic language teacher competency improvement, with a focus on institutional strategies, learning quality, and challenges to teacher professionalism. The background of this study is the importance of Arabic language mastery as a key to understanding the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic literature, as well as the need for students to face global challenges. The research method uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, institutional documentation, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and then analysed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, which involves the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and verification. The results show that institutional strategies such as MGMP, workshops, training, and supervision contribute significantly to improving Arabic language teacher competency. Improved teacher competency has a direct impact on the quality of student learning, as evidenced by increased active participation, higher academic achievement, and more varied classroom interactions. However, the study also identified ongoing challenges, including limited access to up-to-date literature, minimal digital skills, and gaps in pedagogical practices. The implications of this study emphasise the importance of sustainable institutional support and technology integration in the professional development of Arabic language teachers in Islamic boarding schools.

Article History

Received : Agustus 2025

Revised : September 2025

Accepted : December 2025

Keywords

Educational Management, Teacher Competence, Arabic, Islamic Boarding Schools, Teacher Professionalism

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/sedu.v1i1.000>

Cite in APA style as:

Sidqi, M. H., Hindami, Q. H. (2026). Management of Arabic Language Teacher Competency Improvement in Islamic Boarding Schools: Strategic Analysis of Learning Quality. *Journal of Education Management and Policy*, 2(1), 25-38.

INTRODUCTION

Since the founding of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia, Arabic has been a key foundation of Islamic education, key to understanding the Quran,



Hadith, and Islamic literature. However, despite currently having more than 36,000 Islamic boarding schools with approximately 4.5 million students (Urbani, 2020; Khtere & Yousef, 2021), the competency of Arabic language teachers still faces various limitations, both in terms of methodology, linguistic mastery, and the use of learning technology. This condition affects the uneven quality of learning. It reduces the competitiveness of Islamic boarding school graduates, particularly in accessing contemporary Islamic literature or pursuing further studies in the Middle East. This situation emphasises the urgent need to improve Arabic language teacher competency, which must be addressed systematically through a sustainable institutional management strategy.

Several studies have highlighted the competencies and strategies of Arabic language teachers for their improvement, particularly in the context of madrasas and formal Islamic schools. For example, research conducted by Ayagan et al (2021) emphasises the importance of extensive reading practices in Arabic language teaching in higher education, despite the lack of reading materials and training. While Beckmann (2021) show that teacher competence and school policy support play a crucial role in preparing local story-based literacy teaching materials for early childhood. On the other hand, Li & Zhong (2024) emphasises the importance of aligning teacher competence, curriculum, and global needs in the context of GIS education in Saudi Arabia. These three studies demonstrate that teacher competence and institutional management are crucial factors in improving the quality of learning, although their focus and context differ. This study aims to fill this gap by analysing the management of Arabic language teacher competence improvement in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) as a typical Indonesian Islamic educational institution.

The primary issue examined in this research is how Islamic boarding school management strategies enhance the competence of Arabic language teachers, both in terms of planning, implementation, and evaluation. The research questions posed include: (1) What is the actual condition of Arabic language teacher competence in Islamic boarding schools? (2) What strategies are implemented to improve their competence? Moreover, (3) To what extent do these strategies impact the quality of student learning? This research aims to describe the management model employed by Islamic boarding schools and to analyse its effectiveness. The primary focus is on competency improvement management strategies through MGMP forums, workshops, training, and supervision, which have not been widely explored academically in the context of Islamic boarding schools (Khatatbeh Yahya & Al-Mutairi Salwa, 2025). Thus, this research not only addresses the practical needs of institutions but also broadens the horizon of Islamic education management studies.

Argumentatively, this study begins with the assumption that enhancing Arabic language teacher competency through strategic management will have direct implications for the quality of student learning. The MGMP strategy enables teacher collaboration and the transfer of experience. Workshops and training provide opportunities for professional development, while supervision ensures that learning quality standards are met. Recent studies confirm that strengthening teacher capacity based on sustainable management contributes significantly to the quality of

educational institutions' output. If managed consistently, this management model can become a best practice that can be replicated in other Islamic boarding schools. Thus, this study proposes that teacher competency improvement management is not only a technical solution, but also a long-term strategy to maintain the relevance of Islamic boarding schools in the global educational landscape and strengthen their identity as centres of Islamic knowledge that are competitive.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Chosen because it can explore phenomena in depth in a natural context, particularly regarding management strategies for improving Arabic language teacher competency. A case study design was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of management practices implemented in a specific location, allowing for contextual, detailed, and in-depth analysis. This method allows researchers to capture the social, cultural, and institutional dynamics unique to Islamic boarding schools (Sanusi et al., 2020; Soleman et al., 2020).

This research was conducted at the Al-Mashduqiah Islamic Boarding School in Kraksaan, Probolinggo Regency, East Java. This location was chosen because the boarding school has a reputation as a waqf-based Islamic educational institution with a mission to "restore the glory of Islam and Muslims" and a strong focus on Arabic language learning. Furthermore, Al-Mashduqiah has a special intensive Arabic language learning program and implements teacher development management strategies through MGMP (Student Groups), workshops, training, and supervision. Therefore, this location is an ideal setting for analysing strategies to improve Arabic language teacher competency in the pesantren context.

The data sources in this study include: (a) Key informants: Islamic boarding school administrators, madrasah principals, and curriculum coordinators. (b) Primary respondents: Arabic language teachers who actively teach at the Al-Mashduqiah Islamic Boarding School. (c) Supporting informants: senior students who take Arabic language courses, as well as alums who continue their studies at universities. (d) Texts/documents: Islamic boarding school internal curriculum, MGMP meeting notes, training reports, supervision documents, and supporting literature (Arabic books, Islamic boarding school manuscripts, and online sources related to Islamic boarding school education management).

Table 1: Informant Information

Informant Category	Number/Type of Informants	Role in Research
Key Informant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Islamic Boarding School Caretaker - Head of Madrasah - Curriculum Coordinator 	Provides key information regarding the institution's vision, management policies, and strategies for improving teacher competency.
Main Respondent	Active Arabic teachers (5 people)	To be the main source of data related to learning practices, experiences of participating in MGMP, workshops, training, and

		supervision.
Supporting Informant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Senior students (4 people) - Alumni (2 people) 	Providing perspective on the impact of improving teacher competency on the quality of Arabic language learning.
Documents/Archives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal curriculum of Islamic boarding schools - MGMP meeting notes - Training report - Supervision documents - Arabic books/manuscripts 	Become written data to strengthen field findings and validate interview and observation results.

The data collection process was carried out through several techniques, namely: (a) Desk Review: reviewing internal Islamic boarding school documents, educational regulations, and academic literature related to teacher competency improvement management. (b) Participatory Observation: conducted in Arabic language classes and MGMP activities to directly understand learning practices and strategies for improving teacher competency. (c) In-depth Interviews: using semi-structured interview guidelines with Islamic boarding school administrators, Arabic language teachers, and curriculum managers to obtain rich narrative data. (d) Focus Group Discussion (FGD): involving Arabic language teachers and senior students to discuss challenges and strategies for improving competency collectively.

Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2018), which consists of four stages: (a) Data condensation (data reduction): sorting, simplifying, and focusing relevant data from interviews, observations, and documents. (b) Data presentation (data display): organising data in the form of matrices, charts, and thematic narratives for easier understanding. (c) Data verification: triangulating sources and methods to ensure the validity of the findings. (d) Conclusion drawing: connecting empirical data with teacher competency management theory. The analytical methods used were content analysis to examine institutional documents, discourse analysis to understand interview narratives, and interpretative analysis to link findings with the theoretical framework of Islamic education management.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Implementation of Systematic Institutional Strategies (MGMP, Workshops, Training, Supervision)

The implementation of a systematic institutional strategy at the Al-Mashduqiah Islamic Boarding School refers to a series of activities structured by the management to improve the competence of Arabic language teachers. This strategy includes the implementation of Subject Teacher Conferences (STCs) as a forum for discussion and the sharing of good practices, organising educational workshops and seminars to enrich learning methodologies, training to strengthen professionalism, and routine supervision that serves as a control and evaluation mechanism. Operationally, these four strategies do not stand alone but complement each other in building an ecosystem for continuous teacher competency improvement.

A key informant, a pesantren curriculum coordinator, stated that the MGMP (Student Group of Teachers) is an effective instrument for improving the capacity of Arabic language teachers. He stated that this forum provides a space for teachers to deepen their teaching materials, update their learning strategies, and share experiences in addressing student difficulties. He emphasised that collaboration between teachers encourages innovation in the development of learning materials. The researcher's interpretation indicates that the MGMP functions not only as a technical forum but also as a means of enhancing collective professionalism, which has a direct impact on teaching quality.

Another informant, a senior Arabic language teacher, stated that the training and workshops held at the Islamic boarding school had helped him refresh his knowledge of teaching methodology. He cited the use of active discussion-based learning techniques and digital media, examples of which he had rarely used before. He noted that regular supervision also helped maintain consistent teaching quality in the classroom. From the researcher's perspective, this statement demonstrates that institutional strategies not only enhance teachers' knowledge but also transform their mindsets and teaching skills, making them more relevant to the needs of today's students.

The researcher's observations in Arabic language classes revealed positive changes in the learning patterns of teachers actively involved in the MGMP program and training. Teachers were using a more varied range of methods, including conversation simulations, text-based learning, and the use of simple digital media. Furthermore, supervision by the Islamic boarding school management was reflected in the teachers' teaching evaluation records. The researcher's interpretation indicated that these observations confirmed the consistency between informants' statements and actual practice in the field.

Based on interview and observation data, it can be confirmed that the implementation of systematic institutional strategies through MGMP, workshops, training, and supervision has been effective at Al-Mashduqiah Islamic Boarding School. These four strategies act as complementary, layered mechanisms: MGMP serves as a collaborative discussion space, workshops and training enhance practical skills, while supervision ensures the quality of learning is maintained. This data confirms the existence of a consistent and adaptive educational management pattern to the challenges of the times.

From the overall findings, a pattern emerged that the institutional strategy at this Islamic boarding school follows a continuous cycle: increasing knowledge → implementing new methods → evaluating quality → continuously improving. This pattern allows Arabic language teachers to improve their competency not only individually but also collectively through the MGMP forum and supervision. Thus, the Islamic boarding school management has successfully established a teacher development system oriented toward quality learning, relevant to the students' needs, and aligned with the boarding school's vision of strengthening Arabic language proficiency as the basis of Islamic scholarship.



MGMP Activities



Workshop for Teachers

The Direct Relationship Between Teacher Competence and the Quality of Student Learning

Documentation obtained by researchers from learning evaluation reports, supervision notes, and student grade archives indicates a direct link between improvements in Arabic language teacher competency and the quality of learning achieved by students. Supervision notes illustrate improvements in teacher teaching methods after participating in training, such as the use of active discussion strategies, a variety of learning media, and an emphasis on maharah istima', kalam, qiro'ah, and kitabah skills. Meanwhile, student evaluation data indicate an increase in Arabic text comprehension scores following teachers' improvements in their teaching methods. This documentation confirms that competency improvement programs extend beyond teachers, having a direct impact on student learning outcomes. Thus, institutional documentation serves as written evidence that demonstrates the close relationship between teacher capacity and the quality of learning in Islamic boarding schools.

To clarify the relationship between teacher competence and the quality of student learning, the following table presents documented data. This data is taken from the archives of Islamic boarding school learning evaluations for the past academic year, highlighting three leading indicators: student participation, Arabic language test scores, and teacher supervision results.

Table 2: Percentage of the Relationship Between Teacher Competence and Learning Quality

Indicator	Before Teacher Training	After Teacher Training	Change (%)
Active Student Participation	58%	82%	+24%
Average Arabic Test Score	65	78	+13
Teacher Supervision Results (Good)	60%	85%	+25%

The results of Table 2 demonstrate consistent improvement in both teacher competency indicators and student learning outcomes. Documentation data demonstrate that interventions, including training, workshops, and supervision, resulted in significant improvements in the quality of Arabic language learning processes and outcomes. Other documentation also confirms that efforts to improve Arabic language teacher competency are implemented through precise institutional

mechanisms. The internal curriculum prioritises Arabic. MGMP records highlight regular discussions among teachers, training reports document active teacher involvement in workshops, and supervision documents present periodic evaluations. Furthermore, Arabic language books/manuscripts serve as primary teaching references. These data not only corroborate the results of interviews and observations but also demonstrate a structured management pattern.

Table 3: Documentation Related to Improving Arabic Language Teacher Competence

Documentation Types	Main Content Found	Indicators of Relevance to Teacher Competence
Internal Curriculum	Arabic is placed as a core subject with a large allocation of hours	Demonstrates the institution's orientation towards Arabic language mastery
MGMP Notes	Regular discussions on teaching methods, student evaluations, material updates	A collaborative platform for teachers for learning innovation
Training Report	Teachers attended a workshop on modern learning strategies and digital media.	Evidence of increasing teacher professional capacity
Supervision Document	Periodic evaluations related to planning, implementation, and student learning outcomes	Quality control of teaching quality
Arabic Books/Manuscripts	Used as the main source of teaching in the classroom	Strengthening religious literacy based on classical texts

Table 3 clarifies that the existing documentation supports the institutional strategy of Islamic boarding schools in improving the competence of Arabic language teachers, while also proving the existence of a multi-layered and consistent evaluation system. The pattern emerging from this documentation shows that improving teacher competency creates a positive cycle in student learning. First, competent teachers can create a more interactive classroom atmosphere, thus encouraging student participation. Second, increasing the variety of teaching methods makes it easier for students to understand the material, which ultimately improves academic achievement. Third, the results of supervision indicate that improvements in teacher quality are closely linked to improvements in student learning motivation. This pattern can be described as a reciprocal relationship: increased teacher capacity → improved quality of learning interactions → improved student academic outcomes. Thus, the documentation provides consistent evidence that teacher competency improvement management has a significant contribution to improving the quality of Arabic language learning.

The ongoing challenge of maintaining the professionalism of Arabic language teachers

The ongoing challenge of maintaining Arabic language teacher professionalism is understood as a barrier faced by both teachers and institutions in ensuring consistent teacher competency, despite the implementation of various capacity-building programs. Teacher professionalism encompasses not only academic mastery of Arabic but also pedagogical skills, readiness to use digital media, and an ethical commitment to educating students. Operationally, these challenges include limited supporting resources, limited access to up-to-date Arabic literature, and a lack of integration with learning technology. These conditions demonstrate that maintaining teacher professionalism is an ongoing process that requires structural support from Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and individual teacher adaptation to changing times.

An Arabic language teacher stated that limited access to the latest Arabic literature makes it difficult for teachers to update teaching materials to meet the needs of modern students. According to him, most learning resources still rely on classical texts without the support of contemporary texts that are more relevant to current developments in Arabic linguistics. Researchers interpret this limitation as a significant challenge because teachers require more diverse learning resources to connect learning to the global context. Teacher professionalism, in this regard, is primarily determined by their ability to enrich the teaching resources used in the classroom.

Another informant, a curriculum manager, stated that some teachers still struggle to adapt to the use of digital technology in learning. For example, the use of interactive presentation applications or e-learning platforms is not optimal due to the minimal training and limited facilities available. According to the researcher's interpretation, this challenge highlights that teacher professionalism is not only determined by mastery of knowledge but also by technological skills that support Arabic language learning in the digital era. This emphasises the need for Islamic boarding school management to provide ongoing support in the form of digital literacy training so that teachers can remain relevant to the needs of the new generation of students.

Classroom observations revealed significant variation in teacher professionalism. Some teachers demonstrated the ability to integrate modern methods, such as case-based conversation simulations, while others remained committed to traditional lecture-based methods and memorisation. This situation highlights a gap in professionalism that extends beyond academic ability to include pedagogical readiness and innovation in teaching. Researchers interpreted this observation as corroborating interview findings that the challenge to maintaining teacher professionalism lies in the consistent application of competencies, not solely in training attainment.

Based on interview and observation data, researchers reiterated that the ongoing challenges in maintaining Arabic language teacher professionalism arise from three aspects: limited access to up-to-date literature, minimal digital skills, and gaps in pedagogical practices. All three are interrelated and impact the quality of student learning. This restatement emphasises that while competency improvement programs

have had a positive impact, their sustainability requires a stronger support system to prevent teacher professionalism from declining.

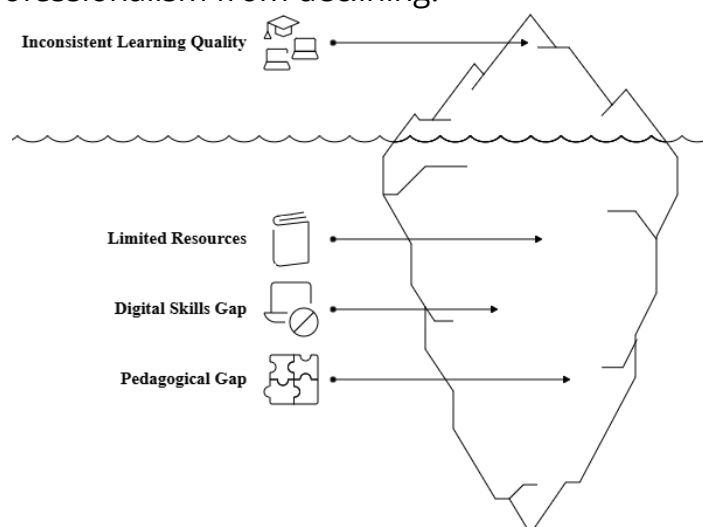


Figure 1: Ongoing Challenges in Maintaining the Professionalism of Arabic Language Teachers.

The pattern emerging from these findings is a recurring cycle of challenges: limited resources → gaps in teacher competency → disparities in learning quality → the need for institutional intervention. This pattern demonstrates that Arabic language teacher professionalism is not a static state but must be continuously maintained through adaptive management. Without consistent intervention, teachers potentially stagnate in their teaching, while students' needs for Arabic language learning become increasingly complex. Thus, this challenge underscores the importance of a continuous professional development strategy that incorporates the provision of new literature, digital training, and regular pedagogical evaluation mechanisms.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of systematic institutional strategies such as MGMP, workshops, training, and supervision successfully improved the competence of Arabic language teachers at the Al-Mashduqiah Islamic Boarding School. This finding aligns with the research of Yakin, Maskud, and Bin Madi (2024), which emphasised that teacher competence is not only formed individually but is also strongly influenced by institutional support through policies and development programs (Rahmah & Prasetyo, 2022; Barokah et al., 2024; Purnomo, 2024). However, unlike the research by Yakin et al., which emphasised early childhood literacy, this study focuses more on enhancing teachers' linguistic and pedagogical skills within the context of Islamic boarding schools (Alhashmi & Moussa-Inaty, 2021; Zahraini et al., 2022). This difference in focus indicates a diversity of approaches to improving teacher competence according to the characteristics of each educational institution.

The finding of a direct link between teacher competence and the quality of student learning reinforces the view of Al Aghar et al. (2023), who highlighted the importance of extensive reading methods in developing students' Arabic language

skills. Like the students in Al Aghar's study, students at this Islamic boarding school also demonstrated improved academic achievement when teachers were more competent in using varied methods (Qushwa, 2023; Hidayah et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024). The similarity lies in the direct effect of teacher competence on student learning outcomes. In contrast, the difference lies in the level of education: higher education versus non-formal Islamic boarding school education. The implication is that, in both formal and informal settings, teachers play a crucial role in facilitating quality learning.

Meanwhile, the findings regarding the ongoing challenges in maintaining the professionalism of Arabic language teachers are relevant to Alrwais's (2024) research, which emphasises the importance of aligning teacher competencies with the curriculum and global demands (Faisol, 2024; Hefniy, 2024). Although the contexts are different, Alrwais's focus on GIS education, as well as the emphasis on updating teacher competencies in line with changing times, highlights the urgent need for this update. Challenges emerging in Islamic boarding schools, such as limited access to up-to-date literature and digital skills, indicate that institutional structures do not fully support the continuity of teacher professionalism (Tereshkina & Tereshchenko, 2020; Mozafarianpour et al., 2023). Thus, there are similarities in the problem patterns: the need to strengthen teacher capacity to align with global changes.

The implications of this study confirm that teacher competence serves as a reinforcing factor (function) that can increase student participation, academic scores, and the quality of classroom interactions. However, on the other hand, limited access to literature and technology can be a dysfunctional factor that weakens the sustainability of teacher professionalism. The correlation between improving teacher competence and the quality of student learning indicates a causal relationship structure: the greater the institutional support for competency improvement, the better the student learning outcomes (Irmawati et al., 2021; Ilmiani et al., 2023; Yamin et al., 2023). Conversely, without ongoing support, teacher professionalism is vulnerable to stagnation even after improvement programs have been implemented.

Conceptually, these findings reinforce educational management theory, which emphasises the importance of the plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle in maintaining institutional quality. The implementation of MGMP, workshops, training, and supervision is a concrete manifestation of this cycle in Islamic boarding schools (Hasan, 2020; Ijah et al., 2021). However, to be more effective, Islamic boarding schools need to incorporate an innovative dimension in the form of digitalised learning and access to global literature to enhance teacher competency. Thus, this study not only confirms previous literature but also makes a new contribution in the context of Islamic boarding schools, which are unique Indonesian Islamic educational institutions. The management patterns identified suggest that successful teacher competency improvement is highly dependent on a combination of institutional strategies, individual teacher readiness, and ongoing structural support.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the implementation of systematic institutional strategies through MGMP (Student Groups of Teachers' Groups), workshops, training, and

supervision has had a significant impact on improving the competence of Arabic language teachers at Al-Mashduqiah Islamic Boarding School. Other findings suggest a direct relationship between teacher competence and the quality of student learning, as evidenced by increased class participation, improved academic achievement, and enhanced learning motivation. However, the study also revealed ongoing challenges in maintaining teacher professionalism, particularly related to limited access to up-to-date literature, technological mastery, and gaps in pedagogical practices. The wisdom of this study lies in the understanding that improving teacher competence is not a one-time effort, but rather a continuous process that requires structural and cultural support from the Islamic boarding school institution.

This paper contributes to scholarship by updating perspectives on Islamic education management, particularly in the context of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). While previous research has primarily focused on teacher competency in formal schools, this study presents an in-depth analysis of management strategies for enhancing Arabic language teacher competency in non-formal institutions typical of Indonesia. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative case study approach with data triangulation (observation, interviews, and documentation) to enrich the findings. Furthermore, this study emphasises institutional management variables as a determinant of teacher professionalism, while broadening the scope of studies on the relationship between teacher competency, learning quality, and professional challenges.

This research still has limitations because it was conducted in only one Islamic boarding school; therefore, the results cannot be generalised to all Islamic boarding schools, which have diverse characteristics, traditions, and resource capacities. The informants involved were also limited to a specific group of teachers and administrators, and did not represent a broader range of teachers' genders, ages, or educational backgrounds. In terms of methods, this study employed a qualitative case study approach, which limited its ability to provide a more representative quantitative picture. Therefore, further research is needed that involves more Islamic boarding schools in various regions, taking into account aspects of teacher gender and age, and utilising mixed methods or large-scale surveys. Thus, the research results can serve as the basis for more comprehensive and targeted policies to improve the competence of Arabic language teachers in Islamic boarding schools.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to the management of Al-Mashduqiah Islamic Boarding School, Kraksaan, Probolinggo, for their valuable support and cooperation throughout the research process. Special thanks are also extended to the Arabic language teachers, curriculum coordinators, and students who participated in interviews and focus group discussions for sharing their insights and experiences. The authors also appreciate the constructive feedback provided by colleagues and academic mentors, which significantly contributed to the improvement of this paper's quality.

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