

The Al-Qur'an Memorization Program as an Instrument for Religious Character Education for Islamic Boarding School Students

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the formation of students' religious character through the tahfidz Al-Qur'an program at Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School, Mojowarno, Jombang. The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of religious character education within the pesantren context. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, involving the pesantren leader, tahfidz instructors, and students as research participants. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation, while data analysis followed an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that students' religious character is developed through the integration of religious habituation, exemplary behavior, and consistent discipline in daily pesantren life. The tahfidz Al-Qur'an program plays a significant role in shaping students' religious character, including discipline, honesty, patience, consistency (*istiqamah*), and responsibility. Activities such as memorization submission, repetition (*muroja'ah*), and recitation evaluation (*tasmi'*) function not only as memorization assessments but also as effective means of internalizing religious values into students' behavior. This study confirms that the tahfidz Al-Qur'an program serves not merely as a memorization activity but as an effective instrument for religious character education in Islamic boarding schools.

Keywords: religious character education, Quran memorization, students, Islamic boarding school

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pendidikan karakter religius santri melalui program tahfidz Al-Qur'an di Pondok Pesantren Al-Azhar Mojowarno Jombang. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus untuk memahami secara mendalam proses pembentukan karakter religius dalam konteks kehidupan pesantren. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi, dengan subjek penelitian meliputi pengasuh pesantren, ustadzah pengampu tahfidz, dan santri. Keabsahan data dijaga melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik, sedangkan analisis data dilakukan secara interaktif melalui tahap reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan karakter religius santri dibentuk melalui integrasi

pembiasaan ibadah, keteladanan pengasuh dan ustadzah, serta disiplin yang diterapkan secara konsisten dalam kehidupan pesantren. Program tahfidz Al-Qur'an berperan signifikan dalam membentuk karakter religius santri, seperti disiplin, kejujuran, kesabaran, istiqamah, dan tanggung jawab. Proses setoran hafalan, muroja'ah, dan tasmi' tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai evaluasi capaian hafalan, tetapi juga sebagai sarana internalisasi nilai-nilai religius dalam perilaku santri. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa program tahfidz Al-Qur'an tidak hanya berorientasi pada penguasaan hafalan, melainkan juga berfungsi sebagai instrumen efektif dalam pendidikan karakter religius santri di lingkungan pesantren..

Kata kunci : *pendidikan karakter religius, tahfidz Al-Qur'an, santri, pesantren*

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Introduction

Religious character education is a fundamental dimension of the Islamic education system because it functions to shape the complete personality of students, not only in the cognitive aspect, but also in the affective and behavioral aspects. Character education is understood as a systematic effort to instill moral, ethical, and virtue values so that students are able to think, behave, and act in accordance with the values they believe in (Lickona, 2012). In the context of Islamic education, religious character refers to attitudes and behaviors that reflect adherence to religious teachings, both in the dimension of vertical relationships with God and horizontal relationships with other humans (Ramayulis, 2015).

The urgency of religious character education is growing as various moral problems emerge among the younger generation, such as declining religious discipline, weak social responsibility, and a crisis of role models in educational settings. This phenomenon demonstrates that education solely focused on acquiring knowledge is insufficiently effective in shaping students' noble personalities (Zubaedi, 2017). Therefore, religious character education needs to be internalized through a continuous process of habituation and a supportive educational environment.

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) have structural and cultural advantages in religious character education because their educational system operates in an integrated, 24-hour format. They serve not only as institutions for transmitting Islamic knowledge but also as spaces for internalizing values through exemplary behavior, discipline, and the development of religious habits (Dhofier, 2011). The pesantren environment allows for the integration of learning, supervision, and religious practice into the students' daily lives.

One Islamic boarding school program with significant potential for developing religious character is the Quran memorization program. Memorizing the Quran not

only demands cognitive abilities but also cultivates patience, consistency, discipline, and personal responsibility in students (Sa'dullah, 2018). The memorization process, which involves continuous memorization, muroja'ah, and tasmi' (recitation), contributes to the formation of religious habits that are internalized in students' behavior.

Several studies have shown that the Quran memorization program has a positive impact on the development of students' religious character, particularly in aspects of discipline, honesty, and responsibility in worship (Afifuddin, 2020; Samad, 2023). However, most studies still view the Quran memorization program as merely a Quran memorization activity, without thoroughly examining how the program functions as a structured and systematic instrument for religious character education in the context of specific Islamic boarding schools.

Based on the research gap, this study aims to analyze the religious character education of students through the Al-Qur'an memorization program at the Al-Azhar Mojowarno Jombang Islamic Boarding School. The focus of the research is directed at: (1) the form of religious character developed by students, (2) the implementation of the Al-Qur'an memorization program, and (3) the relationship between the Al-Qur'an memorization program and the formation of the religious character of students. This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions in the development of studies on religious character education as well as practical contributions to the management of the memorization program in Islamic boarding schools.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, chosen to deeply understand the process of religious character education of students through the Al-Qur'an memorization program in the natural context of Islamic boarding schools. The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore meanings, patterns, and social dynamics that cannot be measured quantitatively, particularly related to the religious values, attitudes, and behaviors of students formed through memorization activities.

The research was conducted at the Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School in Mojowarno, Jombang, a boarding school that prioritizes the Quran memorization program as its flagship program in developing its students. The research subjects were selected purposively, including the school's supervisor, female Islamic teachers (ustadzah) teaching the Quran memorization, and students participating in the Quran memorization program. The selection of informants was based on their direct involvement and understanding of the program's implementation and the development of the students' religious character.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to obtain data on the perspectives, experiences, and strategies for developing religious character through the tahfidz program. Observations were conducted to directly observe the students' religious habits, such as worship, memorization, muroja'ah, and tasmi'. Documentation was used to supplement the data, including activity schedules, memorization books, and relevant pesantren program archives.

Data validity was tested using triangulation techniques and sources, comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation from various informants. Furthermore, researchers extended their field presence and continued observation to ensure the consistency and credibility of the data obtained.

Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, the obtained data was selected and focused on themes related to religious character education and the Quran memorization program. The reduced data was then presented in descriptive-analytical narrative form. The final stage was drawing conclusions, which was carried out in stages and continuously verified until valid and scientifically accountable findings were obtained.

Result and Discussion

Results

The research results show that the religious character education of students at the Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School in Mojowarno, Jombang, is formed through an integration of worship habits, exemplary behavior from teachers and teachers, and the strengthening of discipline in the Quran memorization program. Religious character is not taught conceptually, but rather instilled through the students' daily lives within the Islamic boarding school environment.

Based on interviews with Islamic boarding school administrators, religious character education is seen as the primary goal of Islamic boarding school education, not merely a byproduct of religious activities. The administrator stated:

"At this Islamic boarding school, we emphasize not only that students memorize the Quran, but how the Quran shapes their attitudes toward life. If they memorize it but their behavior doesn't change, it means the process hasn't been successful." (Interview with Supervisor, 2025)

This statement demonstrates that religious character education is a primary focus of every Islamic boarding school program, including the Quran memorization program. Observations support this assertion, as students are accustomed to performing the five daily prayers in congregation, the Dhuha prayer, and reciting prayers before and after learning activities. These activities are carried out

consistently and on a schedule, fostering a disciplined religious practice that is integral to the students' lives.

The female tahfidz teacher explained that cultivating the habit of worship and time management are integral parts of the Quran memorization process. She said:

The religious character of the students is also evident in their daily social behavior. Observations show that students are accustomed to being polite, maintaining good manners, and respecting their teachers and fellow students. The value of responsibility is evident in the students' awareness of participating in Islamic boarding school activities without constant reminders. One student shared his experience as follows:

"At first, I was often late and lazy about handing in memorization. But after a while, I felt bad about being undisciplined, because my other friends were also disciplined." (Student Interview, 2025)

The Quran memorization program at the Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School in Mojowarno, Jombang, is implemented in stages and in a structured manner. The memorization process begins with the binnadzor method to improve recitation, followed by the bilghaib method to memorize Quranic verses. Memorizing sessions are held three times a day, morning, afternoon, and evening, to foster consistency and time management among students.

The tahfidz teacher explained that memorization is not only a means of evaluation, but also a means of developing the mental and character of students. She said:

"When students memorize, we can tell which ones are genuine and which ones are just doing it haphazardly. We emphasize honesty and patience, because memorization isn't instant." (Interview with a Tahfidz Teacher, 2025)

Weekly evaluations, such as tasmi' (recitations), are used to train students' courage and responsibility for the memorization they have learned. Several students admitted that tasmi' activities initially made them nervous, but they gradually built courage and confidence. One student explained:

"The first time I did tasmi, I was really nervous, but I got used to it. From there, I learned to be more prepared and responsible for memorizing on my own." (Student Interview, 2025)

The practice of muroja'ah (recitation) was also a key finding in this study. Students are not permitted to add new memorizations until their previous memorizations are firmly established. This policy fosters patience, perseverance, and consistency. One student explained:

"Sometimes I want to memorize more quickly, but the teacher keeps telling me to repeat things. It was hard at first, but now I'm more patient and my memorization is stronger." (Student Interview, 2025)

The religious character education achieved through the Quran memorization program is evident in the students' changes in their daily behavior. Students who actively participate in the memorization program demonstrate greater discipline in their religious practices, adherence to Islamic boarding school rules, and careful speech. Structured daily activities, imbued with religious values, foster religious habits that directly impact their personalities.

The Islamic boarding school environment plays a significant role in supporting this process. The exemplary behavior of the teachers and ustadzah (religious teachers) is a key factor in shaping the students' religious character. The Islamic boarding school teachers emphasized:

"Students are more likely to imitate than to listen to advice. So we try to set an example, because that's how their character is formed." (Guardian Interview, 2025)

However, this study also identified several obstacles. Internal factors such as laziness, boredom, and difficulty managing time were often experienced by students, especially in the early stages of memorization. External factors included differences in memorization abilities and the students' economic circumstances. However, these obstacles were overcome through a personal approach, motivation, and intensive mentoring by a female tahfidz teacher.

Overall, the research results show that the Al-Qur'an memorization program at the Al-Azhar Mojowarno Jombang Islamic Boarding School not only functions as a memorization activity but also as an effective means of educating the religious character of students through the habituation of worship, discipline, responsibility, and role models.

Discussion

Research findings indicate that religious character education of students at the Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School in Mojowarno, Jombang, does not occur partially, but is integrated into the entire system of Islamic boarding school life. This is in line with the view that character education is not enough to be taught through the transfer of knowledge, but must be internalized through habituation and repeated life experiences (Lickona, 2012). The religious character of students is formed through consistent worship practices, time discipline, and the example of caregivers and ustadzah, which simultaneously shape patterns of religious behavior in everyday life.

The religious character identified in this study encompasses both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimension is evident in the students' discipline in carrying out obligatory and recommended religious practices, such as congregational prayer, the Dhuha prayer, and prayers before and after learning activities. This finding supports Ramayulis's (2015) view that religious character is reflected in an individual's adherence to religious teachings in daily life. Meanwhile,

the horizontal dimension is reflected in politeness, honesty, responsibility, and respect for teachers and fellow students. This demonstrates that religious character education in Islamic boarding schools fosters not only individual piety but also social piety.

The Quran memorization program has proven to play a significant role as an instrument for religious character education. The process of memorizing the Quran, which demands consistency, patience, and honesty, indirectly trains the character of students. This finding aligns with Sa'dullah (2018), who stated that Quran memorization is not only a cognitive activity but also a mental and spiritual development process. Regular memorization practices train students to be responsible for the mandate of memorization, while muroja'ah (recitation of the Quran) fosters perseverance and consistency in maintaining memorization.

The results of this study also support the findings of Afifuddin (2020), who stated that the Quran memorization program contributes to shaping the religious character of students, particularly in terms of discipline and honesty. However, this study demonstrates a broader dimension, namely how the memorization program is systematically integrated with the habituation of worship and the strengthening of character values within Islamic boarding school life. Thus, memorization is not positioned as a separate program, but rather as part of a holistic religious character education system.

The practice of tasmi' and muroja'ah in the tahfidz program also has significant implications for the character development of students. Tasmi's activities train students' courage, mental readiness, and responsibility for the memorization they have acquired. This aligns with the concept of experiential character education, where students learn character values through real-life situations that demand emotional and moral engagement (Zubaedi, 2017). Students are not only tested on their memorization skills but also trained to be honest, confident, and responsible in their learning process.

The religious and disciplined environment of Islamic boarding schools is a key supporting factor in the success of students' religious character education. This finding supports the ecological theory of education, which states that the learning environment has a significant influence on the formation of individual character (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The exemplary behavior of caregivers and religious teachers in maintaining good manners, discipline, and consistent worship provides a model of behavior that is easily imitated by students. This aligns with the role model method, which is considered the most effective strategy in character education (Ulwan, 2013).

However, this study also found obstacles in implementing religious character education through the Quran memorization program. Internal factors such as

laziness, boredom, and difficulty managing time indicate that character formation is not an instant process and requires ongoing support. These findings align with Samad (2023), who stated that the success of the memorization program is greatly influenced by the psychological readiness and internal motivation of the students. Therefore, the role of the female teacher in providing motivation and a personal approach is key to overcoming these obstacles.

External factors such as differences in memorization abilities and the economic conditions of students also influence the effectiveness of the tahfidz program. These findings indicate that religious character education cannot be separated from the social and economic context of students. This aligns with the view that character education must consider individual backgrounds and provide adaptive development strategies (Dhofier, 2011). Intensive mentoring and a humanistic approach implemented in Islamic boarding schools are crucial strategies for maintaining the sustainability of student character development.

Conceptually, the findings of this study reinforce the view that religious character education is most effective when implemented through an integration of learning, habituation, and role modeling within a conducive educational environment. The Qur'an memorization program serves as a concrete medium for internalizing religious values, as students interact not only with the Qur'anic text but also with the values contained therein through daily life practices. Thus, Qur'an memorization contributes not only to improving memorization skills but also to the ongoing formation of students' religious character.

Compared with previous research, this study has a novel contribution in emphasizing the functional relationship between the Al-Qur'an memorization program and religious character education in the context of Islamic boarding schools. While previous research has focused more on the effectiveness of the tahfidz program in improving memorization or discipline, this study shows that Al-Qur'an memorization can be an instrument of religious character education integrated into the Islamic boarding school system. These findings enrich the scientific treasury of Islamic education, particularly in the development of a model of Islamic boarding school-based religious character education.

Thus, this discussion confirms that the success of religious character education for Islamic boarding school students lies not in the number of programs implemented, but rather in the quality of integration of religious values into every educational activity. The Qur'an memorization program, if managed systematically and supported by a conducive Islamic boarding school environment, can be a strategic tool in developing students who not only memorize the Qur'an but also possess religious character and noble morals.

Conclusion

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that the religious character education of students at the Al-Azhar Mojowarno Jombang Islamic Boarding School takes place in an integrated manner within the pesantren's life system. Religious character is not formed through theoretical teaching alone, but through the habituation of worship, the exemplary behavior of the guardians and ustadzah, and discipline that is consistently applied in the students' daily activities. The religious character of students is reflected in their obedience to worship, politeness, honesty, responsibility, and adherence to the pesantren's rules.

The Qur'an memorization program has proven to play a strategic role in supporting the religious character education of students. The structured process of memorizing the Qur'an through memorization, muroja'ah, and tasmi' not only improves students' memorization skills but also fosters discipline, patience, consistency, and personal responsibility. The Qur'an memorization program serves as a concrete medium for internalizing religious values because students interact intensively with the Qur'an in their daily lives. This study shows a strong link between the Qur'an memorization program and the formation of students' religious character. Routine and ongoing memorization activities create a pattern of religious habits that impact changes in students' attitudes and behavior. Thus, the Qur'an memorization program functions not only as a religious academic program but also as an effective instrument for religious character education in the context of Islamic boarding schools.

Theoretically, this study contributes to strengthening the study of religious character education by emphasizing that the internalization of religious values will be more effective if carried out through the integration of learning, habituation, and role models in a conducive educational environment. Practically, the findings of this study can be a reference for Islamic boarding school managers and Islamic educational institutions in developing Al-Qur'an memorization programs that are not only oriented towards memorization achievements, but also towards the holistic formation of the religious character of students. This study has limitations in the scope of the location, which is limited to one Islamic boarding school, and a qualitative approach that focuses on deep meaning, so the results of the study cannot be generalized widely. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine religious character education through Al-Qur'an memorization programs with a comparative or quantitative approach, and involve more Islamic boarding school educational institutions to obtain a more comprehensive picture.

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