

Becoming Hamil Al-Qur'an: A Case Study of Qur'an Memorization Among Students at MAN 3 Kediri

Fitria Arifa Dewi¹

MAN 3 Kabupaten Kediri Kandangan

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***Correspondence Address:**

fitriaarifadewi@gmail.com

Abstract: Al-Qur'an is the easiest holy book to learn, mentioned four times in QS. Al-Qamar verses 17, 22, 32, and 40. Therefore, Muslims guided by Al-Qur'an should not only recite it but also understand and memorize its content. Memorizing is closely related to one's memory condition, which affects individual results. In Ma'had Ar Ridwan MAN 3 Kediri, all boarding students are required to become *Hamil Al-Qur'an*. However, the memorizing process faces internal and external obstacles, causing differences in the amount of memorization. This study examines the memorization process in Ma'had Ar Ridwan, strategies used by boarding students to become *Hamil Al-Qur'an*, and supporting and inhibiting factors from psychological, social, and Islamic perspectives. This research aims to help improve the *tahfidz Al-Qur'an* program. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews with *mushahih* (correctors) and boarding students who have varying amounts of memorization. The data were analyzed based on psychological, social, and Islamic theories. Results show that memorization begins with reciting *bi nadhar*. No specific method is used, but students practice continuously, usually during *sahur* time in a quiet place. Supporting factors include family encouragement and facilities, while inhibiting factors involve *mushahih* attitudes, peer influence, and school activities.

INTRODUCTION

Islam obliges its followers to learn, understand, and live by the Qur'an, not only through recitation but also memorization (*tahfidz*). Memorizing the Qur'an is considered the highest stage of studying it, but this process is influenced by many psychological (memory, motivation, repetition), social (environment, peer influence), and Islamic perspectives (intention, sincerity, practices, and ritual guidance). Memorization is both a religious duty and a cognitive process, which makes it urgent to investigate systematically, particularly within formal boarding schools where students face both academic and *tahfidz* demands.

The implementation of *tahfidz* programs in formal schools, such as MAN 3 Kediri, which since 2015 has required its boarding students to memorize

Qur'an as part of their formation as *Hamil Al-Qur'an*. However, variations in memorization achievements among students reveal that not all supporting and inhibiting factors are well understood. Addressing this gap is important for strengthening the effectiveness of *tahfidz* education.

The literature review shows that past studies have examined memorization factors, methods (such as *muraja'ah*), and success rates in different pesantren or *tahfidz* institutions. However, these works are often limited to either external or internal factors or single memorization methods. None combine psychological, social, and Islamic perspectives comprehensively, nor focus on the case of MAN 3 Kediri's boarding school program.

This research is combine three disciplines, there are psychology, social perspectives, and Islamic thought to analyze Qur'an memorization. Second, focusing on a formal school boarding program rather than purely pesantren based contexts, and identifying practical strategies and contextual challenges that can inform the development of *tahfidz* education nationally. The impact is expected to advance knowledge in Islamic education, enrich *tahfidz* pedagogy, and serve as a reference for strengthening educational policy on *tahfidz* programs in schools.

Based on background explained by author above, the problem formulation that guides this study are (1) how is the Qur'an memorization among boarding students at MAN 3 Kediri and its process?; (2) how the strategies in memorizing Qur'an among boarding students at MAN 3 Kediri?; (3) what are the supporting and restricting factors in memorizing Qur'an boarding students at MAN 3 Kediri? Based on problem formulation, the objectives of this research are describe Qur'an memorization among boarding students at MAN 3 Kediri and its process; explain the strategies, supporting and restricting factors in memorizing Qur'an among boarding students at MAN 3 Kediri.

A. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study approach at Ma'had Ar-

Ridlwan MAN 3 Kediri. Data were collected through observations of daily memorization activities (*ziyadah* and *muraja'ah*), semi-structured interviews with students, *mushahih*, mentors, and school leaders, as well as document analysis of memorization records and institutional regulations. Both primary sources (students, teachers, administrators) and secondary sources (documents and archives) were used. Data were analyzed using Creswell's qualitative framework, involving data organization, coding, categorization, thematic identification, and interpretation. The research procedure consisted of three phases, preparation, fieldwork, and reporting.

B. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Process of Memorizing Qur'an

The process of Qur'an memorization at Ma'had Ar-Ridlwan MAN 3 Kediri follows a relatively structured pattern that has been institutionalized in the boarding school environment. Students generally begin with *bi nadhar*. It is reading directly from the mushaf to familiarize themselves with the verses before committing them to memory. This stage is considered essential because accurate recognition of script, tajwid (rules of recitation), and fluency are foundational to correct memorization. After several repetitions of *bi nadhar*, students proceed to internal memorization, attempting to recall verses without looking at the mushaf, and then submitting their memorization to the *mushahih* (corrector) or mentor for evaluation.

A central feature of this process is *muraja'ah*. It is continuous review of previously memorized portions. Students typically allocate specific periods of the day for *muraja'ah*, often pairing it with new memorization (*ziyadah*). For example, a student may memorize half a page of new verses, then review one or two pages previously memorized. This routine ensures retention and prevents forgetting, particularly given the length and complexity of Qur'anic passages.

Timing also plays a crucial role in the process. Most students reported that the *sahur* period, before dawn prayer, was their most productive time. They found their minds fresh and the environment quiet, enabling deeper

concentration. Other students preferred late evening or secluded corners of the prayer hall, where distractions were minimal. The process was therefore shaped not only by individual cognitive capacity but also by environmental conditions.

The memorization journey at MAN 3 Kediri is cyclical: *bi nadhar* → independent memorization → submission to the mushahih → *muraja'ah* → reinforcement through repetition and social correction. This cyclical pattern reflects a balance between individual cognitive effort and social accountability.

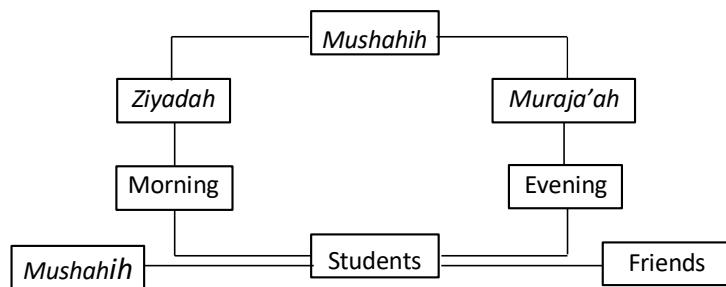


Figure 1. Rehearsal (*Muraja'ah*) System in Ma'had Ar Ridwan

From a psychological standpoint, this process illustrates the fundamental principles of memory encoding, storage, and retrieval. According to Atkinson and Shiffrin's multi-store model, information passes from sensory input to short-term memory and then into long-term memory through rehearsal. The students' practice of *bi nadhar* represents initial encoding, while repeated recitation consolidates storage in long-term memory.

Craik and Lockhart's levels of processing theory provides another lens, deeper engagement with the Qur'anic text through careful articulation, tajwid, and spiritual intention enhances durability of memory. The students' emphasis on accuracy during *bi nadhar* suggests that they are not merely repeating words mechanically but engaging semantically and spiritually, which aligns with the "deep processing" model.

The choice of *sahur* as the most effective memorization time is also supported by psychological literature. Studies on circadian rhythms indicate that memory consolidation is optimal when cognitive resources are fresh, often in early morning hours. This parallels findings by Tilley & Warren, who

demonstrated that recall improves significantly when learning occurs during periods of high alertness and low distraction.

Moreover, the process of *muraja'ah* is strongly tied to Ebbinghaus's forgetting curve, which shows that information is quickly lost without systematic review. The students' regular practice of reviewing previously memorized passages is an implicit response to this cognitive reality. By engaging in spaced repetition, they are counteracting the natural decay of memory described in decay theory and reducing interference effects.

Thus, the memorization process at MAN 3 Kediri can be seen as a living application of classical psychological theories of memory. The practices of repetition, timing, and review directly reflect the strategies recommended by cognitive science for durable learning.

The process is also profoundly social. Memorization is not conducted in isolation but within a boarding school environment where collective routines, peer accountability, and teacher supervision are integral.

Bandura with his social learning theory explains this dynamic, students observe and imitate peers who are more advanced in their memorization, and they are motivated by external reinforcement from teachers and *mushahih*. The practice of submitting memorization to a *mushahih* introduces a system of feedback and reinforcement that both corrects errors and motivates persistence.

While Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development is visible in the way mentors scaffold learning. Students often learn best when their *mushahih* or peers provide just enough guidance to help them master a verse slightly beyond their current ability. Peer recitation circles further embody Vygotsky's social constructivism, where knowledge is co-constructed through interaction.

The timing and location of memorization, such as the communal pre-dawn sessions are also socially shaped. Students reported that seeing their peers engage in memorization at *sahur* encouraged them to do the same, creating a culture of discipline. Conversely, students who isolated themselves for memorization often did so because the communal spaces were crowded or noisy, reflecting the dual impact of social environment: it can both facilitate and hinder

focus. Thus, from a social theory perspective, the memorization process is not merely individual cognitive activity but embedded in a web of relationships, routines, and expectations.

Islamic tradition provides a rich framework for understanding the process of Qur'an memorization. Classical scholars emphasized both the mechanics of repetition and the spiritual dimensions of sincerity and discipline. Imam al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, in *al-Jami' li Akhlaq al-Rawi*, recommended memorization at dawn, when the heart is pure and distractions minimal. This mirrors the students' preference for *sahur* memorization at MAN 3 Kediri. Imam Ibn al-Jauzi also stressed that night

and pre-dawn hours are superior for memorization because the mind is freer from worldly concerns.

The role of *muraja'ah* is also affirmed in Islamic pedagogy. Imam Zarnuji, in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, argued that knowledge is preserved only through repetition and review. This mirrors the students' daily routines of revisiting old memorization alongside new portions.

Spiritual intention (*niyyah*) is another crucial Islamic perspective. Imam Syafi'i taught that sincerity and avoidance of sin strengthen memory. At MAN 3 Kediri, several students explicitly connected their success in memorization with spiritual practices such as *tahajjud* (night prayer), fasting, and maintaining *ikhlas*. This suggests that the process is not only cognitive but also spiritual, where divine blessing is considered essential for memory retention. Thus, the memorization process observed in the field directly embodies centuries of Islamic scholarship, showing continuity between classical pedagogy and contemporary practice.

2. Strategies in Memorizing Qur'an

In addition to understanding the process of memorization, this study revealed the diverse strategies that students at Ma'had Ar-Ridwan MAN 3 Kediri employed to strengthen their Qur'an memorization. While there was no single standardized method imposed by the institution, students developed strategies that suited their cognitive styles, social contexts, and spiritual

commitments. Strategies that used by boarding students at MAN 3 Kediri, there are:

(a) Double Repetition

Reciting verses multiple times until fluency was achieved before moving on. This strategy are direct applications of Baddeley and Hitch's working memory model, where rehearsal strengthens the transfer of information from short-term to long-term memory. It is also align with Ebbinghaus' principle of overlearning, which shows that retention improves significantly with repeated recitation even after initial mastery. Imam Zarnuji, in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, taught that repetition and consistency are the foundation of retaining knowledge. Students' practice of reciting verses repeatedly before moving forward directly reflects this principle.

Craik and Lockhart's levels of processing theory also explains why students' attention to *tajwid* and meaning supports deeper encoding and longer-lasting memory. The preference for *sahur* memorization resonates with research on circadian rhythms and cognitive performance, where early hours often yield higher concentration and memory retention. There is an opinion by As Suyuthi in Al Itqan, that "*Reciting Al Qur'an after ashar is makruh, and says: time after salat Ashar is Yahudi's time to study, and it is not granted by Allah and also don't have strong foundation.*".

In addition, place is also affect to repetition. Imam Khatib Al Bagdadi recommended place when boarding students memorizing Qur'an is in the upper room (*loteng*). While according to Imam Nawawi, the mosque is best place to memorize because its own glory and virtue than the other places. So, anyone who learn in mosque will be easier understanding the material or verses that will be memorizing.

(b) Chunking Methods

Chunking into smaller units, breaking long verses into smaller parts and gradually linking them together. This reflects Miller's theory of chunking, which posits that the human short-term memory can retain approximately seven units

of information at a time. By dividing long verses into smaller parts, students reduce cognitive load and enhance recall. Classical ulama' recommended dividing memorization into small, consistent portions, warning against overburdening oneself. Imam Nawawi advised students to focus on quality over quantity, memorizing small sections perfectly rather than large portions imperfectly.

(c) *Qur'an Pojok*

Use of *Qur'an Pojok*, it aligns with Paivio's dual coding theory which states that information encoded both visually and verbally is more easily remembered. The distinctive layout of the *Qur'an Pojok* provides spatial anchors that support memory retrieval. Based on social perspective, peer recitation exemplifies Vygotsky's social constructivism, where learning is facilitated by interaction within the zone of proximal development. Students often relied on peers for scaffolding, receiving corrections when memory failed, and encouragement when persistence waned.

(d) Peer Recitation

This strategy incorporates both retrieval practice and feedback mechanisms. Karpicke and Roediger demonstrated that active retrieval significantly enhances long-term retention compared to passive review. By reciting to peers and receiving corrections, students engage in productive recall, which strengthens neural pathways. The Prophet Muhammad encouraged companions to recite Qur'an to each other, and early Muslim communities practiced collective muraja'ah. This tradition continues in the peer recitation strategies of MAN 3 Kediri students.

Strategies like memorizing at the same time as peers, or joining group muraja'ah, created a culture of accountability. This aligns with Bandura's social learning theory, where observing others' discipline motivated individual commitment.

(e) Writing Verses

Writing verses that can activate kinesthetic memory and supports encoding through multiple sensory channels, resonating with multi- modal learning theory.

Many students of Qur'an began by copying the mushaf by hand as both a spiritual exercise and a memorization aid. This tradition continues to resonate in students' use of writing as a strategy. Imam Syafi'i said:

اللَّهُمَّ صَبِّرْ وَالْكَاتِبَةَ قَبْدَهُ * فَيَادْ صُبِّيْ وَذَكْ الْلِّبَابَالْأَنْوَافَ

Its quote can be seen that when something is written down, it will stick more in mind than only listen or seen.

(f) Audio Reinforcement

Which students listen and repeat after qari' connects with auditory learning styles and phonological loop theory within Baddeley's working memory model. Hearing rhythmic and melodic pattern also enhances encoding through prosody and auditory scaffolding. Thus, the strategies observed at MAN 3 Kediri reflect practical applications of major cognitive theories, showing that traditional memorization methods are implicitly consistent with modern psychology. Many students adopted the practice of listening to famous qari because it was socially valued in their learning environment.

The prestige of imitating renowned reciters created motivation that transcended personal preference, reflecting the role of cultural capital in shaping learning strategies. Qur'an is fundamentally an oral text, and memorization has always been tied to listening to qualified reciters. Imam al-Jazari emphasized the importance of listening to and imitating expert qari for correct tajwid and memorization.

Taken together, the strategies at MAN 3 Kediri illustrate a holistic approach to Qur'an memorization are cognitive dimension: Repetition, chunking, visualization, writing, and audio reinforcement align with theories of memory and learning; social dimension: Peer recitation, teacher supervision, and cultural valuation of qari highlight the social construction of strategies; and spiritual

dimension: Repetition, gradual mastery, and listening as acts of devotion reflect Islamic pedagogical values. It shows that memorization is not a one-size-fits-all process but an adaptable set of strategies shaped by psychological mechanisms, social structures, and Islamic tradition.

3. Supporting and Restricting Factors in Memorizing Qur'an

Students at Ma'had Ar-Ridwan MAN 3 Kediri identified a range of factors that supported their success in memorizing the Qur'an. These factors can be grouped into five categories, there are:

a. Family Encouragement

Parents played an important role in motivating students through prayers, emotional support, and sometimes financial sacrifices. Many students explicitly mentioned that their parents' intention (*niyyah*) for them to become *Hamil al-Qur'an* strengthened their perseverance. Family encouragement and intrinsic motivation reflect self- determination theory which identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key drivers of sustained effort. Students with strong parental support and personal intention were more resilient against setbacks.

From a social standpoint, family encouragement is consistent with Bandura's social learning theory, that children internalize expectations modeled by parents, whose emotional and spiritual support becomes part of the student's learning identity.

Then in Islam, family encouragement reflects the Qur'anic emphasis on parental guidance in education. Parents' prayers (*doa*) are considered a form of spiritual reinforcement that supports *barakah* in learning.

b. *Mushahih* Guidance

Mushahih structured the memorization process by setting daily targets, evaluating recitations, and providing feedback. Their presence gave students accountability and discipline. *Mushahih* feedback connects to reinforcement theory where corrective responses serve as either positive reinforcement (encouraging persistence) or negative reinforcement (reducing errors). However, overly strict *mushahih* sometimes created anxiety, which psychological

literature (e.g., Krashen's affective filter hypothesis) shows can block cognitive processing.

According to Goleman, when human feel afraid, amigdala give a sign to brain. The sign that have been sent make the memory mixed cortex to get an experience file that matches the emergencies faced. It can eliminating the other paths of thought. While Ellis and Ashbrook, emotion can affect the setting of source allocation or attention capacity that limited in work assignments. So, it can cause the capacity to process information decreases, then memory can't called effectively. In this case, emotion increase frequency of students' heartbeat significantly, and memory can loss suddenly.

Social perspective explain that guidance within the zone of proximal development enables students to achieve tasks they could not complete alone. The challenge, however, is maintaining scaffolding without slipping into intimidation.

Mushahih guidance aligns with the Islamic tradition of *sanad* (chains of transmission), where knowledge is preserved through teacher-student accountability. However, Islamic scholars such as Imam al-Ghazali warned against teachers using harshness that diminishes a student's motivation, which resonates with students' negative experiences of strict *mushahih*.

c. Structured Boarding Routines

The daily schedule in the dormitory included fixed times for *ziyadah* and *muraja'ah*. This routine minimized procrastination and created consistency. Structured routines embody habit formation theory where repeated behavior at fixed times becomes automatic, reducing reliance on fluctuating willpower.

Muraja'ah and review practices counteract forgetting as described by Ebbinghaus's forgetting curve. Students who reviewed regularly retained verses longer, while those who skipped reviews experienced memory decay. Imam Zarnuji's advice that knowledge is best acquired through consistency and discipline. Daily *muraja'ah* reflects his dictum that knowledge not repeated will be lost.

The collective pre-dawn sessions reflect Durkheim's concept of social

regulation, where structured routines shape individual discipline. However, social context was ambivalent while peers motivated persistence, overcrowding and noise sometimes disrupted concentration. So, boarding students have to know that time also impact in *muraja'ah* process.

Craik and Lockhart's levels of processing theory explains why students' attention to tajwid and meaning supports deeper encoding and longer-lasting memory. The preference for *sahur* memorization resonates with research on circadian rhythms and cognitive performance, where early hours often yield higher concentration and memory retention. Then,

d. **Intrinsic Motivation and Spiritual Practices**

Many students were driven by their personal desire to become *Hamil al-Qur'an*. They reinforced this motivation with voluntary practices such as tahajjud (night prayer), fasting, and reciting specific supplications believed to strengthen memory. Intrinsic motivation and spiritual practices embody Imam Syafi'i's teaching that sincerity, avoidance of sin, and devotion (night prayer, fasting) strengthen memory. Students themselves linked their progress to such practices, showing the lived relevance of classical teachings.

e. **Conducive Environment and Facilities**

Access to mushaf, prayer halls, and relatively quiet spaces provided an environment conducive to memorization.

At the same time, students also faced challenges that restricted their progress:

a. **Strict or Discouraging Attitudes from Some Mushahih**, while feedback was essential, some mushahih were perceived as overly harsh, creating anxiety and reducing students' confidence in recitation.

b. **Inadequate Facilities**, some students reported that crowded dormitories and lack of personal space made memorization difficult.

c. **Peer Distractions**, not all peers were equally disciplined; some disrupted others' focus, creating tension between communal learning and individual concentration. Peer recitation and peer distractions illustrate the dual nature of social influence. On one hand, peers act as accountability partners; on the other hand, they can become sources of distraction. This

tension reflects conformity and peer influence theories, where social groups can both elevate and derail performance. Restricting factors such as peer distraction and lack of sincerity can be understood through Imam Ali's warning that *riya'* (showing off) undermines true learning. Similarly, laziness (*kasal*) is considered a spiritual disease that blocks both understanding and memory.

d. Academic Workload, as MAN 3 Kediri is a formal school, students also had to manage academic subjects. This dual burden often limited the time and energy available for *tahfidz*. It illustrates interference theory, where new learning competes with previously stored information. Students juggling science or mathematics often reported forgetting verses, confirming interference effects. It is partly structural issue, that balancing dual expectations (school curriculum and *tahfidz*) illustrates how institutional design shapes learning outcomes.

These restricting factors highlight the tension between aspiration and reality in balancing Qur'an memorization with other institutional demands. Together, these factors created a supportive ecosystem that combined family, institutional, and personal dimensions.

C. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that Qur'an memorization at Ma'had Ar-Ridlwan MAN 3 Kediri follows a structured process beginning with *bi nadhar* and reinforced through repetition and *muraja'ah*. Students adopt strategies such as memorizing during pre-dawn hours, choosing quiet places like balconies and mosques, and practicing *ziyadah* and *muraja'ah* under mushahih supervision, supported by spiritual practices like *qiyamul lail*. Success is influenced by family encouragement, teacher guidance, and conducive routines, while obstacles include strict supervision, limited facilities, peer distractions, and academic demands. Overall, Qur'an memorization emerges as a holistic practice shaped by cognitive processes, social interactions, and Islamic values.

In light of the findings, it is recommended that Qur'an memorization at Ma'had Ar-Ridwan be supported through structured targets for students, an increased number of *mushahih* to ensure accuracy, and improved infrastructure to create a more conducive learning environment. Strengthening these aspects will enhance the effectiveness of the tahfidz program and contribute to the development of Qur'an memorization within formal educational institutions.

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