Problems of students in memorizing the Quran in Islamic boarding school in Koto Kampar Hulu District

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the challenges faced by students (*santri*) in memorizing the Qur'an in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Koto Kampar Hulu District. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving *santri*, *tahfizh* teachers, and *pesantren* administrators. The findings indicate that students experience both internal and external obstacles in the memorization process. Internal challenges include limited mastery of *makharijul huruf* and *tajwid*, lack of consistency (*istiqamah*), insufficient practice of *muraja'ah*, difficulties in memorizing long and *mutasyabihat* verses, and rapid forgetting of previously memorized passages. External factors consist of learning environment conditions, mentoring patterns, and varying levels of parental support. To address these challenges, *pesantren* implement several strategies, such as routine *muraja'ah*, grouping students based on memorization ability, strengthening learning motivation, and involving parents in supporting the memorization process. The study concludes that consistency and regular repetition play a more decisive role in successful Qur'anic memorization than intellectual ability alone.

Keyword: santri; Quran memorization; learning problems; Islamic boarding school

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia has deep historical roots, with Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) serving as one of its most important pillars. As traditional educational institutions, *pesantren* play a central role in producing generations of Muslims who not only master religious knowledge but also possess strong moral character and spirituality. One of the most prominent and continuously preserved traditions within *pesantren* is the memorization of the Qur'an (*tahfizh al-Qur'an*) (Fitri, 2023). *Tahfizh* is regarded not only as a noble act of worship but also as a strategic educational goal within Islamic education.

Despite its noble status, the process of memorizing the Qur'an does not always run smoothly. In practice, many students (*santri*) encounter various obstacles that hinder memorization progress, reduce motivation, and even lead to failure in achieving memorization targets. These challenges arise from both internal and external factors. Internal factors include individual differences in memory capacity, learning styles, motivation, discipline, and consistency (*istiqamah*) in practicing *muraja'ah*. Students with weaker memorization abilities often require more intensive repetition and specific learning strategies; without adequate support, their progress tends to stagnate.

In addition to internal factors, external factors originating from the *pesantren* environment also significantly influence the memorization process. These include teaching and mentoring methods applied by *tahfizh* teachers (*asatidz*), learning schedules, facilities, peer interactions, and the overall academic climate within the *pesantren*. Differences in management systems and educational traditions among *pesantren* may lead to varying patterns of challenges experienced by students. Furthermore, parental support and students' socio-economic backgrounds also play an important role in shaping motivation and perseverance in memorizing the Qur'an.

Although previous studies have widely discussed the challenges of Qur'anic memorization in *pesantren*, most remain general in scope and do not sufficiently explore local contexts and specific institutional characteristics. Research focusing on concrete problems faced by *santri* in particular regions, especially in

Koto Kampar Hulu District, is still limited. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining in depth the internal and external problems encountered by *santri* in memorizing the Qur'an and by analyzing the strategies implemented by *pesantren* to address these challenges. By doing so, this research contributes to a more contextual understanding of *tahfizh* education and provides practical insights applicable to similar *pesantren* settings.

Islamic boarding schools in Koto Kampar Hulu District, Kampar Regency, Riau Province, possess distinctive characteristics shaped by local cultural, social, and institutional conditions. The presence of several *pesantren* in this district reflects strong community commitment to Qur'anic education. However, variations in facilities, teaching approaches, and student backgrounds among *pesantren* may result in unique challenges in the *tahfizh* process. Therefore, focusing on this specific geographical context allows for a more contextual and in-depth understanding of the problems faced by *santri* in memorizing the Qur'an (Ismail et al., 2022).

Based on the above discussion, it is evident that although memorizing the Qur'an constitutes the core of education in many *pesantren*, the challenges faced by *santri* in this process require serious attention and systematic study. Accordingly, this research focuses on the problems encountered by *santri* in memorizing the Qur'an in Islamic boarding schools throughout Koto Kampar Hulu District.

Based on the research background, this study seeks to explore the problems encountered by santri in memorizing the Qur'an in Islamic boarding schools throughout Koto Kampar Hulu District. Specifically, the research focuses on identifying the internal problems faced by santri during the Qur'anic memorization process, as well as examining the external factors within the pesantren environment that influence their memorization activities. In addition, this study investigates the strategies and solutions implemented by Islamic boarding schools to overcome these problems and to support santri in achieving effective and sustainable Qur'anic memorization.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
A. *Basic Concepts of the Qur'an*

As the word of God, the Qur'an holds a very special position and is regarded as a perfect guide to life for all humankind. It contains comprehensive teachings on *aqidah* (faith), *sharia* (law), *akhlaq* (morals), as well as narratives and warnings. The revelation of the Qur'an occurred gradually over a period of approximately 23 years, in accordance with the context and needs during the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This gradual revelation reflects divine wisdom in guiding humanity through different phases of social and spiritual development.

The authenticity (*otentisitas*) of the Qur'an is one of its most distinctive characteristics compared to other holy scriptures. Unlike previous scriptures that experienced textual changes due to human intervention, the Qur'an has been preserved in its original form. This preservation ensures the integrity of its content and distinguishes it from other sacred texts that do not possess the same level of textual certainty. Therefore, it is essential for Muslims not only to read the Qur'an but also to actively internalize and implement its teachings in daily life.

One of the Qur'an's functions is as a *mushaddiq* (justifier of previous scriptures), meaning that it confirms earlier revealed books such as the Torah, the Zabur, and the Gospel. While affirming their original divine messages, the Qur'an also corrects deviations and alterations that occurred in those scriptures over time. The special status of the Qur'an is further reflected in the position of a *hafiz* or *hafizah*—individuals who memorize the Qur'an—who are regarded as people entrusted with safeguarding the words of Allah in their hearts. Their role is highly honored, as they serve as living preservers of the Qur'an and as guiding lights for the Muslim community.

B. *Problems in Memorizing the Qur'an*

Various factors contribute to difficulties in memorizing the Qur'an. In addition to cognitive aspects, fluctuations in motivation represent a significant challenge for students. At the beginning of their studies, students often arrive with strong enthusiasm, driven by sincere intentions or parental expectations. However, over time, monotonous routines, demanding memorization targets, and a lack of positive feedback may gradually diminish their motivation. Students may experience boredom, fatigue, or discouragement when facing repeated difficulties or slow progress.

Low self-efficacy, defined as a lack of confidence in one's ability to successfully memorize, often emerges as a consequence of repeated failures. When students lose belief in their own capabilities, they tend to avoid challenges, show low persistence, and give up easily. This condition ultimately hinders the continuity and effectiveness of the memorization process.

External factors related to the *pesantren* environment also significantly influence memorization. Suboptimal learning conditions—such as noisy surroundings, inadequate lighting, or limited access to supporting facilities like libraries and sufficient *mushaf* copies—can disrupt concentration. Moreover, an unsupportive social and cultural environment within the *pesantren*, including unhealthy competition or bullying, may generate psychological stress. Students who feel emotionally insecure or socially excluded often struggle to focus on memorization, as their mental energy is consumed by coping with these pressures.

Overall, problems in memorizing the Qur'an represent a complex and multifactorial issue involving interactions between cognitive ability, internal motivation, the role of *asatidz* and teaching methods, and environmental conditions within the *pesantren*. If these issues are not identified and addressed comprehensively, they may result in slow memorization progress, weak retention, prolonged demotivation, and even stress or anxiety among students. Therefore, a holistic approach that considers all these dimensions is essential to optimize the memorization process and help students achieve their noble goals.

Several specific factors commonly identified as obstacles in memorizing the Qur'an include: (1) inadequate mastery of *makharij al-huruf* and *tajwid*; (2) lack of seriousness or patience; (3) failure to avoid immoral behavior; (4) frequently changing the *mushaf*; and (5) insufficient prayer and spiritual preparation.

Thus, mastery of *tajwid* is not merely a complementary skill but a fundamental and non-negotiable foundation in memorizing and preserving the Qur'an (Rahman & Virahmawaty, 2020).

3.   RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method, which is an investigative approach that focuses on developing an in-depth understanding of social phenomena from the perspectives of participants. The primary aim of qualitative research is to explore meanings, experiences, and perceptions within their natural contexts. This research was conducted at the Al-Karomah Aidarusy and Miftahul Mu'arrif Islamic boarding schools located in Kampar Hulu District, Kampar Regency, Riau Province. The selection of this location was based on the presence of several *tahfizh* (Qur'an memorization) educational institutions in the district, which provides an opportunity to explore diverse perspectives and dynamics related to students' challenges in memorizing the Qur'an within a specific geographical context.

This study utilizes both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through direct interactions with Qur'an memorization students, *asatidz* (tahfizh teachers), and Islamic boarding school administrators in Kampar Hulu District. In addition, primary data were collected through direct observations of the teaching and learning processes as well as daily activities within the Islamic boarding school environment. Secondary data consist of existing information that has been intentionally collected to support the research objectives (Ahmad & Muhammad Fachrurrazy, 2024). These sources include *tahfizh* curriculum documents, students' memorization progress records (when available), relevant scientific literature on *tahfizh* education and Islamic boarding schools, and general profiles of Islamic boarding schools in Kampar Hulu District.

The data collection techniques used in this study include interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted using open-ended questions and active listening techniques to build rapport with participants, enabling them to share their experiences and perspectives honestly and comprehensively (Ramdhan, 2021). Observations were carried out to capture real-life learning situations and interactions, while documentation was used to complement and validate the data obtained from interviews and observations.

Data analysis in this qualitative research was conducted using a systematic thematic analysis approach. The analysis process was carried out iteratively, beginning with data collection and continuing through data organization, coding, theme development, and interpretation, until the final report was completed (Prasetyo, 2014).

4.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
A.   *Discussion*

Students encounter various difficulties in memorizing and properly reciting the Qur'an. Nevertheless, it is expected that they will be able to recite and internalize it accurately and comprehensively, so that the Qur'an can truly function as guidance for humanity. Based on interviews conducted with students, several major problems were identified in the process of Qur'an memorization, as described below.

1) Limited Mastery of Makharij al-Huruf and Tajwid

One of the main problems faced by Islamic boarding school students in memorizing the Qur'an is their insufficient mastery of *makharij al-huruf* (articulation points of letters) and *tajwid* rules. Research findings

indicate that many students experience difficulties because they had never formally studied *tajwid* nor participated in Qur'an memorization programs during their elementary education. As a result, their pronunciation of Qur'anic letters often requires correction.

This condition was confirmed by Informant 1, who stated:

"Some students have not mastered *tajwid* and *makharij al-huruf*, so there are still many recitations that need correction during memorization sessions. In addition, students sometimes feel lazy, which causes their memorization to be easily forgotten, and they often feel sleepy while memorizing the Qur'an."

According to Wahbah az-Zuhaili (1994), the Qur'an must be recited slowly and clearly, with proper articulation of letters, in order to help readers understand its meaning and reflect upon its message. Observing *tajwid* is obligatory for every Qur'an reader, as the Qur'an was revealed with *tajwid*. Deliberate and continuous errors in pronunciation (*al-lahn al-jali*) are considered prohibited because they may alter the meaning of the verses.

Based on this explanation, the students' lack of comprehensive understanding of *tajwid* and proper letter articulation significantly hinders the memorization process. Therefore, maintaining and strengthening *tajwid* knowledge is a fundamental principle in Qur'an memorization, as incorrect pronunciation can lead to misinterpretation of the Qur'anic message.

2) Laziness in Muraja'ah (Repetition of Memorization)

Another major challenge faced by students in memorizing the Qur'an is laziness in performing *muraja'ah*. Interviews revealed that students often feel discouraged when reviewing memorization, particularly because many Qur'anic verses are similar and difficult to distinguish. Informant 2 stated:

"The difficulty I experience when memorizing the Qur'an is feeling lazy during *muraja'ah*, because many verses are similar and hard to differentiate."

According to Abdul Aziz Abu Jawrah (2017), forgetting the Qur'an is one of the greatest calamities. Sins and negligence can lead to laziness in worship, reflection, and productive activities, which ultimately affect the strength of one's memorization. When this condition persists, it weakens the student's ability to retain memorized verses.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the importance of consistent repetition. As narrated by Ibn Umar, the Prophet said:

"If the memorizer of the Qur'an recites it in prayer during the night and day, he will retain it. But if he does not recite it, he will forget it." *(Ash-Shihah: 597)*

The findings indicate that laziness originates from internal factors and significantly affects students' consistency in memorization. Laziness not only slows progress but also causes memorization decline. In contrast, perseverance, patience, discipline, and strong determination—values emphasized in the Qur'an—are essential for maintaining memorization.

3) Lack of Istiqamah (Consistency) in Memorization

A further challenge encountered by students is the lack of *istiqamah* in both reviewing previous memorization and adding new verses. One student explained:

"The difficulty in memorizing the Qur'an is the lack of consistency in repeating old memorization and adding new verses. Sometimes students feel lazy or lose focus, so memorization becomes irregular. Students are also not consistent in setting daily memorization targets, and they often struggle with long verses, resulting in suboptimal memorization."

Consistency is a crucial factor in the Qur'an memorization process. Wiwi Alawiyah Wahid (2015) explains that intelligence alone does not determine success in memorizing the Qur'an. Rather, strong consistency and perseverance enable individuals of average ability to surpass those who are more intellectually gifted but inconsistent.

Memorizing the Qur'an is a long-term process that requires clear goals, patience, and sustained commitment. Students must continuously balance the maintenance of previous memorization with the addition of new verses. Without *istiqamah*, even strong initial memorization efforts may gradually weaken.

4) Forgetting Memorization

Forgetting memorized verses is one of the most common and challenging problems faced by students who memorize the Qur'an. Memorization requires a balance between adding new verses and maintaining previously memorized ones. As the well-known proverb suggests, fluency is achieved through continuous repetition. Without regular review, memorized verses are vulnerable to being forgotten.

Based on interviews with students, several obstacles related to forgetting memorization were identified. These include difficulties in mastering *makharij al-huruf* and *tajwid*, confusion between similar verses, and limited ability to explain or articulate memorized verses correctly. These difficulties are often rooted in insufficient foundational knowledge of recitation rules, which directly affects memorization quality.

Despite these challenges, solutions are consistently emphasized by both students and educators. Informant 3 stated:

"One solution to overcome the problem of easily forgetting memorization is to routinely repeat the memorized verses every day, even if it is only a few verses."

This statement is supported by Informant 4, who explained:

"One of the main ways to prevent students from forgetting their memorization is to recite the Qur'an regularly. Students should have a fixed schedule for reviewing old memorization every day, for example after the obligatory prayers. Regular evaluation is also important so that students feel responsible for maintaining their memorization."

These findings indicate that *muraja'ah* (regular repetition) is the most effective strategy to overcome forgetfulness, laziness, and inconsistency in Qur'an memorization. Even reviewing a small portion daily helps preserve memorization and prevents rapid decline.

In addition to repetition, mastery of recitation (*qira'ah* and *tajwid*) plays a crucial role in strengthening memorization. Informant 4 explained that students are assessed before entering the Islamic boarding school through tests of Qur'an reading fluency and *tajwid*. Based on the results, students are grouped into *halaqah* according to their abilities. However, students who are still at the beginner level of *tajwid* often experience greater difficulty, which hinders their memorization process.

Similarly, Informant 5 stated:

"In our *halaqah*, which is the second level from the top, all students have already mastered the science of recitation, and this makes memorizing the Qur'an much easier for them."

These findings demonstrate that grouping students based on their recitation competence is a crucial strategy to ensure effective guidance. Observations further confirm that *halaqah* consisting of students with limited *tajwid* mastery show slower progress compared to those whose members have already mastered recitation rules.

Another major issue affecting memorization is a lack of enthusiasm or motivation. Informant 5 explained:

"One of the factors that keeps students enthusiastic about memorizing is encouragement from parents without coercion. When children are not ready to memorize, they are not forced. However, when they are willing, parents fully support them."

This view was reinforced by Informant 6, who stated:

"When students feel tired or complain, parents always provide encouragement and sometimes rewards. This support makes students more enthusiastic about memorizing."

The interview results highlight parental support as a key external factor influencing students' success in memorizing the Qur'an. Emotional encouragement, appreciation, and rewards help sustain motivation, especially during difficult periods. Informant 6 further emphasized the spiritual dimension of parental support:

"The ease of memorization often comes from parents' prayers. Students should always ask for their parents' blessings and prayers, because this greatly helps smooth the memorization process."

This was confirmed by Informant 7, who stated:

"Before entering the Islamic boarding school, students must have sincere intentions and parental support. Parents must be patient, sincere, and continuously pray for their children, because this greatly influences their enthusiasm for memorizing."

Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, it can be concluded that solutions to external challenges—such as low motivation and environmental distractions—include strong parental support, which plays a crucial role in maintaining students' emotional stability and motivation. Additionally, effective time management is essential for balancing school activities, boarding school routines, and Qur'an memorization. Discipline and clear prioritization enable students to remain consistent in their memorization efforts.

Furthermore, the use of online platforms such as WhatsApp groups, Instagram, and online *halaqah* has proven effective in maintaining communication, encouraging consistency, and motivating students to continue memorizing the Qur'an. These platforms serve as supplementary support systems that reinforce discipline, enthusiasm, and continuity in the memorization process.

B. *Data Analysis*

1) Problems in Memorizing the Qur'an

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, several major problems were identified in the process of Qur'an memorization among students.

a) Limited Mastery of Makharij al-Huruf and Tajwid

One of the primary problems faced by students is their insufficient mastery of *makharij al-huruf* (articulation points of letters) and *tajwid* rules. This limitation causes difficulties in memorization because inaccurate pronunciation affects fluency and confidence in recitation. Proper *tajwid* regulates the correct articulation, length, and shortness of sounds in Qur'anic verses, which is essential not only for recitation accuracy but also for preserving meaning.

When students do not adequately master *makharij al-huruf* and *tajwid*, errors frequently occur in pronunciation, making memorization more difficult. Therefore, *tahfizh* teachers play a crucial role in teaching and reinforcing the science of *tajwid* and articulation before and during the memorization process. Strengthening these foundational skills helps reduce mistakes related to recitation length, articulation, and rhythm, thereby supporting smoother and more accurate memorization.

b) Laziness in Recitation (Muraja'ah)

Laziness is a common human tendency and often emerges during the Qur'an memorization process. In the Qur'anic perspective, individuals are encouraged to remain diligent, attentive, and enthusiastic in performing beneficial activities throughout the day. However, boredom in reading or listening to the Qur'an—especially among students who have not yet experienced the spiritual enjoyment of memorization—can gradually lead to laziness in *muraja'ah* (repetition of memorization).

Observations indicate that many students perceive Qur'an memorization merely as an academic subject. After completing a portion of memorization, they rarely review it, which leads to rapid forgetting. Laziness may also stem from misdirected inner motivation. When enthusiasm is not properly guided, it can turn into impatience or neglect. Memorizing the Qur'an is a valuable blessing, and one form of gratitude for this blessing is maintaining memorization through consistent *muraja'ah*. Regular repetition is therefore essential to prevent memorization decline.

c) Lack of Istiqamah (Consistency) in Memorizing the Qur'an

A major obstacle in Qur'an memorization is the lack of consistency (*istiqamah*), both in maintaining previous memorization and adding new verses. Memorizing the Qur'an requires continuous effort, perseverance, and discipline to achieve the ultimate goal of memorizing all thirty chapters.

Forgetting often results from carelessness rooted in laziness and weak commitment. The core issue is not the difficulty of memorization itself, but rather how consistently students manage their memorization routine. *Muraja'ah* must always accompany the addition of new memorization. Interviews revealed that students frequently struggle to differentiate similar verses and easily forget earlier memorization due to irregular review habits.

d) Forgetting Memorization

Forgetting memorized verses is a natural challenge in the Qur'an memorization process, particularly due to the large number of verses involved. Forgetfulness is an inherent human trait and cannot be entirely avoided. However, it can be minimized through systematic *muraja'ah*. Forgetting may occur naturally over time, but it is often intensified by negligence and laziness.

Successful Qur'an memorization requires accurate recitation in accordance with *tajwid* rules and proper articulation of *makharij al-huruf*. Errors in pronunciation can affect both the meaning of verses and the continuity of memorization. Therefore, mastery of *tajwid* is not only a religious obligation but also a technical foundation that supports memorization accuracy and fluency (Rahman & Virahmawaty, 2020).

Maintaining memorization requires balance between adding new verses and repeating previous ones. Interview data indicate that students who consistently perform *muraja'ah* are better able to retain their memorization and distinguish between similar verses.

2) Steps to Overcome Problems in Memorizing the Qur'an

Several strategies can be implemented to address the challenges faced by students in memorizing the Qur'an.

One of the most fundamental steps is regular and consistent *muraja'ah*. Continuous repetition strengthens memory retention, as memorization that is not reviewed regularly tends to fade over time. Through

daily *muraja'ah*, students become more fluent and confident in their recitation, which supports long-term memorization preservation. Therefore, *muraja'ah* should be an integral component of students' daily routines.

Another important strategy is providing continuous reminders and motivation. Motivation significantly influences students' enthusiasm and perseverance in memorization. Teachers play a key role in offering encouragement, advice, and positive reinforcement to help students remain disciplined and committed to their memorization targets. Parental support is equally important, as a supportive home environment enhances students' motivation and emotional stability. When students receive encouragement from both teachers and parents, they are more likely to remain consistent in memorizing and reviewing the Qur'an.

Finally, grouping students based on their abilities is an effective approach to improving memorization outcomes. This strategy enables teachers to tailor instruction according to students' levels of competence. Students who are still developing *tajwid* skills require more intensive guidance compared to those who have already mastered them. Observations show that learning groups consisting of students with limited *tajwid* mastery progress more slowly than groups with stronger foundations. By grouping students according to their abilities, the memorization process becomes more focused, effective, and responsive to individual learning needs.

5. CONCLUSION

Observing *tajwid* is obligatory for every reader of the Qur'an. Therefore, anyone who recites the Qur'an without applying *tajwid* commits an error, as the Qur'an was revealed with specific rules of recitation. Mistakes in *makharij al-huruf* (articulation of letters) are categorized as *al-lahn al-jali*, which is prohibited when committed intentionally and repeatedly. One of the fundamental principles of Qur'an memorization is maintaining proper *tajwid* knowledge so that it does not hinder the correct pronunciation of long and short sounds during recitation. Errors in *tajwid* may lead to changes in meaning, making accuracy in recitation essential.

Another common problem encountered in Qur'an memorization arises from internal factors. Laziness is one of the major challenges faced by students who memorize the Qur'an and can significantly affect their memorization progress. In addition, weak self-discipline and poor reasoning in managing time and effort can contribute to a decline in memorization quality. The Qur'an emphasizes the values of hard work, perseverance, patience, and persistence, all of which are essential attitudes for successful memorization.

Consistency plays a crucial role in the process of memorizing the Qur'an. Even individuals with high intellectual ability may fail if they lack consistency, while those of average intelligence who maintain regular practice and discipline often achieve better results. Fundamentally, success in memorizing the Qur'an is determined not by intelligence alone, but by strong commitment, perseverance, and consistency.

Memorized verses also present challenges due to the large number of verses and their similarities. Therefore, individuals who memorize the Qur'an must maintain a balance between adding new memorization and regularly repeating previously memorized verses. Repetition, even of a small number of verses, is essential to preserve memorization and prevent rapid forgetting. In addition to repetition, mastery of *tajwid* plays a vital role in achieving fluency in memorization. Previous interviews indicate that difficulties in *tajwid* often hinder students' memorization process, further highlighting the importance of proper recitation skills in maintaining accurate and fluent Qur'an memorization.

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