

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TAHFIZH PROGRAM FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN DEVELOPING RELIGIOUS CHARACTER AT AL MANAR STUDENT ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL IN PONOROGO

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Abstract :

The integration of Qur'an memorization into university based Islamic boarding education offers an important strategy for developing students whose religious character is grounded in sustained religious practice rather than memorization achievement alone. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Qur'an memorization program, examine its contribution to the formation of students' religious character, and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors at Al-Manar Student Islamic Boarding School, Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo. A descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design was employed. Data were obtained through in depth interviews with the boarding school leadership, memorization coordinators, mentors, and students, complemented by participant observation and documentation, and analyzed using an interactive qualitative model. The findings show that the program is implemented through initial Qur'anic competency screening, differentiated learning groups, daily memorization submission, collective review, adaptive use of the Utrujah and Ummi methods, and a structured follow up program. The program strengthens religious character through more disciplined congregational worship, intensive Qur'anic engagement, improved Qur'anic knowledge, spiritual calmness, and more responsible and ethical social behavior. Its effectiveness is supported by a religious institutional climate and intensive mentoring, while time conflicts, fatigue, and varied initial Qur'anic abilities remain major constraints. The findings position tahfizh as an integrated character-formation mechanism within higher-education pesantren.

Keywords : *Qur'an Memorization; Religious Character; Student Islamic Boarding School; Qur'anic Habituation; Islamic Higher Education*

Abstrak :

Integrasi program tahfizh Al-Qur'an dalam pendidikan pesantren berbasis perguruan tinggi menjadi strategi penting untuk membentuk mahasiswa yang memiliki karakter religius melalui praktik keagamaan yang berkelanjutan, bukan semata-mata melalui pencapaian hafalan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis implementasi program tahfizh Al-Qur'an, mengkaji kontribusinya terhadap pembentukan karakter religius mahasiswa, serta mengidentifikasi faktor pendukung dan penghambat pelaksanaannya di Pesantren Mahasiswa Al-Manar Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan desain studi kasus. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pimpinan pesantren, koordinator tahfizh, musyrif/musyrifah, dan mahasiswa, serta melalui observasi partisipatif dan dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan model interaktif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa program dilaksanakan melalui screening

kemampuan Al-Qur'an, pembagian kelompok pembinaan, setoran hafalan harian, muroja'ah bersama, penerapan adaptif metode Utrujah dan Ummi, serta program tindak lanjut yang terstruktur. Program memperkuat karakter religius melalui kedisiplinan ibadah berjamaah, intensitas interaksi dengan Al-Qur'an, peningkatan pengetahuan Al-Qur'an, ketenangan spiritual, serta tanggung jawab dan etika sosial. Keberhasilan program didukung iklim pesantren yang religius dan pendampingan intensif, sedangkan konflik waktu, kelelahan, dan perbedaan kemampuan awal menjadi kendala utama. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa tahfizh dapat berfungsi sebagai mekanisme pembentukan karakter yang terintegrasi dalam pendidikan pesantren perguruan tinggi.

Kata Kunci: Tahfizh Al-Qur'an; Karakter Religius; Pesantren Mahasiswa; Pembiasaan Al-Qur'an; Pendidikan Tinggi Islam

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is increasingly expected to develop graduates who combine intellectual competence with moral responsibility, spiritual maturity, and social integrity. This expectation becomes particularly important for university students who experience complex academic, organizational, and social environments that may weaken the continuity of religious practice. Religious character in higher education therefore cannot be treated merely as the transmission of doctrinal knowledge but needs to be cultivated through sustained institutional practices. Recent studies indicate that character development among university students is most effective when religious values are integrated into educational culture, daily activities, and relationships between educators and students rather than confined to classroom instruction (Alimron et al., 2023; Abdullah & Abdur Rahman, 2025). In this context, student Islamic boarding schools provide a distinctive environment for integrating academic life with structured religious formation.

Qur'an memorization represents one of the potentially powerful mechanisms for such integration because memorization requires repetition, discipline, consistency, concentration, and continuous interaction with Qur'anic teachings. Recent research demonstrates that tahfizh programs can contribute to religious discipline, responsibility, patience, istiqamah, and noble behavior when memorization is accompanied by habituation, mentoring, and exemplary conduct (Samad et al., 2023; Khaeruniah et al., 2024; Ya'cub et al., 2026). The process is not limited to increasing the quantity of memorized verses. Daily submission, *muroja'ah*, evaluation, and interaction with mentors create repetitive experiences through which religious values can gradually become behavioral dispositions. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of such programs depends strongly on the educational environment and management system surrounding the memorization process.

Existing studies can be grouped into three complementary perspectives. The first emphasizes the contribution of tahfizh to religious and moral character. Studies in Islamic schools and pesantren show that memorization programs strengthen discipline, responsibility, faith, and ethical behavior through habituation and continuous Qur'anic engagement (Samad et al., 2023; Wijayanti & Kurniawan, 2025; Ya'cub et al., 2026). The second perspective focuses on the management and pedagogical dimensions of tahfizh, demonstrating that structured planning, mentoring, evaluation, and supervision influence the sustainability of memorization and character development (Oktaviani et al., 2025; Hermawan & Firdaus, 2025). The third perspective highlights the psychological and contextual dimensions of Qur'an memorization, including self efficacy, social support, motivation, emotional regulation, and the learning environment (Yundianto et al., 2023; Taufikurohman & Achadi, 2024; Falasifah & Juliati, 2025). Together, these studies establish that tahfizh can function beyond memorization, but they leave insufficient explanation of how a structured tahfizh system operates specifically within the dual demands of university study and pesantren life.

The gap becomes more evident when attention is directed toward university students living in Islamic boarding schools. University students differ from school age students because they simultaneously negotiate academic workloads, organizational commitments, personal autonomy, and religious expectations. Astuti's study of university students at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Furqon 2 Malang shows that tahfizh activities can support time discipline through structured daily routines, but the study primarily describes program activities and their contribution to student character (Astuti, 2023). Similarly, research on Qur'an memorization among university students has demonstrated the importance of concentration, intrinsic motivation, spiritual discipline, environmental support, and emotional regulation (Yundianto et al., 2023; Falasifah & Juliati, 2025). These findings are valuable but do not sufficiently explain how institutional management, differentiated Qur'anic competency, daily memorization targets, mentoring mechanisms, and follow-up arrangements interact to produce religious character outcomes.

This study therefore positions Pesma Al-Manar Ponorogo as a distinctive case of Qur'an memorization embedded within a Muhammadiyah university environment. Its novelty lies in examining tahfizh not simply as a memorization curriculum but as an integrated institutional system connecting

initial competency screening, differentiated learning groups, daily memorization submission, collective *muroja'ah*, adaptive use of the Utrujah and Ummi methods, intensive mentoring, worship habituation, and a structured follow up program. This integrated perspective extends previous research that has generally examined memorization methods, character outcomes, or program management separately. It also responds to evidence that higher education religious character formation requires continuous institutional reinforcement and opportunities for students to translate religious knowledge into sustained practice (Alimron et al., 2023; Abdullah & Abdur Rahman, 2025).

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze three interconnected dimensions of the tahfizh program at Pesma Al-Manar Ponorogo its implementation mechanism, its contribution to the formation of students' religious character, and the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting its implementation. Rather than measuring memorization achievement alone, the study examines how a structured Qur'anic learning environment becomes a medium for developing disciplined worship, sustained Qur'anic engagement, spiritual experience, religious knowledge, responsibility, and ethical behavior. This focus is expected to contribute empirical evidence for the development of Qur'an based character education models that are responsive to the distinctive academic and social conditions of university students.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design to examine the implementation of the Qur'an memorization program and its contribution to religious character formation within its natural institutional context. A qualitative case study was appropriate because the study focused on understanding the interaction between program management, participants' experiences, religious practices, and institutional conditions rather than measuring predetermined variables. Recent methodological reviews confirm that educational case studies commonly combine interviews, observations, document analysis, coding, and triangulation to establish contextual depth and interpretive credibility (Khairiyah et al., 2026).

The research was conducted at Al-Manar Student Islamic Boarding School, Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo. Primary participants consisted of the boarding school leader, tahfizh program coordinator, *musyrif/musyrifah*, and participating students selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the program and their capacity to provide information about its

implementation and outcomes. Data were collected through semi structured in depth interviews, participant observation of screening, memorization submission, *muroja'ah*, congregational worship, and daily boarding school activities, as well as documentation of program guidelines, schedules, memorization records, mentoring materials, and follow up activities.

Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative model comprising data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Coding focused on program implementation, religious character manifestations, and supporting and inhibiting conditions. Data credibility was strengthened through source and technique triangulation, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and peer debriefing. This combination is consistent with recent qualitative case-study practices that emphasize methodological triangulation and cross-source verification in educational research (Akhyar et al., 2024; Khairiyah et al., 2026).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Institutionalized and Adaptive Implementation of the Tahfizh Program

The findings demonstrate that the tahfizh program at Pesma Al-Manar is implemented as a structured institutional system rather than as an isolated memorization activity. The program begins with a three day screening process that maps students' Qur'anic reading, tajwid, makhraj, and initial memorization abilities, followed by placement into ten learning groups. Daily activities are organized around three principal periods afternoon, evening, and after the dawn prayer with a minimum target of one new surah per day and collective *muroja'ah* of Juz 30. The system is complemented by a 16 session follow-up program for students who have not completed the regular target. This structure reflects the principle that effective tahfizh requires continuity, supervision, differentiated support, and regular evaluation rather than memorization targets alone. Comparable research shows that systematic tahfizh programs become more effective when habituation, mentoring, evaluation, and institutional management operate simultaneously (Samad et al., 2023; Oktaviani et al., 2025; Ya'cub et al., 2026).

The adaptive use of the Utrujah and Ummi methods constitutes an important feature of the program. Utrujah is prioritized for strengthening memorization and Qur'anic accuracy, while Ummi is used to support students whose foundational reading and tajwid competencies remain limited. This

differentiation prevents initial competency gaps from becoming permanent barriers to participation. The finding extends earlier studies that commonly emphasize particular memorization techniques, such as *talaqqi*, *muraja'ah*, *tasmi'*, or repetition, by showing that a higher-education tahfizh program may require methodological flexibility according to students' heterogeneous starting points (Khaeruniah et al., 2024; Hermawan & Firdaus, 2025). The program's novelty therefore lies not in the use of a single superior memorization method, but in the institutional capacity to combine methods according to learner needs while retaining common standards of Qur'anic accuracy and memorization achievement.

The organizational structure further explains why the program can operate alongside students' university obligations. The leadership communicates targets and regulations, mentors provide direct supervision, students are grouped according to learning needs, and follow up sessions function as a mechanism for preventing students with slower progress from being excluded from the program. Such arrangements resemble the management model identified by Oktaviani et al. (2025), in which planning, structured mentoring, submission of memorization, evaluation, and supervision jointly contribute to religious-character development. However, Pesma Al-Manar extends this model by incorporating an explicit academic *pesantren* balance and a post program follow up mechanism. The contribution of this finding is therefore the identification of adaptive institutional continuity as a central principle in managing tahfizh for university students.

Tahfizh as a Mechanism of Multidimensional Religious Character Formation

The program's most substantial outcome is the transformation of Qur'an memorization from a technical learning obligation into a routine that reinforces religious character. Students demonstrate greater consistency in congregational obligatory prayer, morning and evening remembrance, and scheduled *tahajjud*, while daily memorization and *muroja'ah* strengthen their continuous interaction with the Qur'an. This pattern supports research showing that religious character is more likely to develop when religious practices are repeatedly embedded in daily routines rather than taught only through formal instruction (Wijayanti & Kurniawan, 2025; Ya'cub et al., 2026). The finding also corresponds with research on Islamic higher education demonstrating that religious values become meaningful when they move from value transmission toward internalized attitudes and observable behavior (Abdullah & Abdur

Rahman, 2025). Thus, the distinctive contribution of Pesma Al-Manar is the use of memorization routines as a bridge between religious knowledge and repeated religious practice.

The findings also indicate a strong spiritual dimension. Students experience more intensive emotional engagement with the Qur'an, particularly during early-morning memorization and *muroja'ah*, which they perceive as a calm and conducive period for concentration and spiritual reflection. This finding resonates with research on university students memorizing the Qur'an in pesantren, which identifies concentration, intrinsic motivation, spiritual discipline, emotional regulation, and environmental support as important conditions for deep engagement in memorization (Falasifah & Juliati, 2025). It also complements research showing that religiosity among Qur'an memorizers is associated with psychological and spiritual experiences that extend beyond formal religious observance (Taufikurohman & Achadi, 2024). The present case extends these findings by showing that the institutional routine itself can create a recurring temporal and social environment in which spiritual experience is reinforced through collective practice.

The character transformation extends beyond ritual behavior into social ethics. Students show greater responsibility, independence, honesty, politeness, and awareness of appropriate conduct, including changes in speech and appearance. These outcomes suggest that the program operates through an internalization process in which repeated Qur'anic engagement is reinforced by mentor modeling and the religious culture of the boarding school. Similar patterns have been reported in research linking Qur'an memorization with discipline, responsibility, patience, *istiqamah*, and noble conduct (Samad et al., 2023; Khaeruniah et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the Pesma Al-Manar case adds a higher-education dimension: religious character is cultivated while students simultaneously negotiate university responsibilities and social autonomy. The specific contribution is therefore a holistic tahfizh character pathway connecting cognitive mastery, ritual discipline, spiritual experience, and ethical conduct rather than treating memorization achievement as the final educational outcome.

The five-dimensional perspective of religiousness further clarifies this transformation. The program strengthens belief through students' growing perception of the Qur'an as a life guide ritual practice through regular prayer, *tahajud*, memorization, and *muroja'ah* experiential religiosity through feelings of

tranquility and spiritual closeness intellectual religiosity through tajwid, makharijul huruf, and Qur'anic learning and consequential religiosity through ethical conduct in daily social relations. This multidimensional pattern is consistent with contemporary studies that conceptualize religious character as involving interconnected cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social dimensions rather than a single observable religious practice (Alimron et al., 2023; Dimyathi et al., 2025). The contribution of the present study is to demonstrate how one institutional program tahfizh can connect these dimensions through a continuous cycle of memorization, worship, mentoring, reflection, and social habituation.

Institutional Support, Student Constraints, and Adaptive Mitigation

The effectiveness of the program is strongly associated with the religious ecosystem surrounding students. Institutional support from Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo, the availability of boarding school facilities, a religious residential environment, and consistent involvement of *musyrif/musyrifah* provide the social and organizational infrastructure necessary for sustained memorization. Mentors function not only as evaluators of memorization but also as role models, emotional supporters, and supervisors of students' religious routines. This finding is consistent with research showing that character formation is strengthened when educational institutions combine structured programs with exemplary leadership, religious culture, and interpersonal support (Akhyar et al., 2024; Fadli et al., 2025). It also corresponds with research on Qur'an memorization indicating that social support can influence students' persistence and self-efficacy (Yundianto et al., 2023). The distinctive contribution here is that institutional support operates simultaneously at the academic, residential, pedagogical, and spiritual levels.

The major constraints, however, emerge from the distinctive status of the participants as university students. Academic assignments, examinations, organizational activities, and campus schedules can conflict with boarding school routines. Physical fatigue after a full day of academic activities can reduce motivation and concentration, while students from non *pesantren* backgrounds may require additional assistance because of weaker foundational Qur'anic literacy. These findings reinforce recent evidence that students who combine academic responsibilities with Qur'an memorization face substantial demands related to time management and self regulation (Siddik & Khairuddin, 2026). They also complement psychological research

demonstrating that memorization requires academic hardiness, self efficacy, and social support (Yundianto et al., 2023). Unlike models designed primarily for school age students, the Pesma Al-Manar model must therefore negotiate two institutional schedules and two sets of expectations.

The program's response to these constraints demonstrates adaptive rather than rigid management. Mentors may adjust submission times without reducing standards, students with weak Qur'anic foundations receive additional *tahsin* support, and the 16 session follow-up program provides additional time for students who have not achieved the regular target. This approach resembles findings from recent tahfizh research emphasizing personalized support, institutional management, and differentiated mentoring as mechanisms for sustaining Qur'an memorization and character formation (Hermawan & Firdaus, 2025). It also differs from purely target oriented models because students' difficulties are treated as conditions requiring pedagogical adjustment rather than merely as failures to meet numerical targets. The contribution of this finding is the formulation of flexible accountability program standards remain stable, while the pathway toward achieving those standards is adjusted according to students' academic workload, physical condition, and Qur'anic competence.

Taken together, the findings indicate that successful tahfizh implementation for university students depends on the interaction of three conditions institutional structure, sustained interpersonal mentoring, and adaptive management of student diversity. The program becomes effective not because students are simply required to memorize, but because memorization is embedded within a controlled religious environment, supported by mentors, connected to worship routines, and adjusted to individual needs. This finding extends previous research that has tended to emphasize either memorization methods or character outcomes by demonstrating that the relationship between tahfizh and religious character is mediated by the quality of the institutional ecosystem in which memorization takes place (Oktaviani et al., 2025; Ya'cub et al., 2026). The resulting model can be understood as an integrated institution mentor student ecosystem for religious character formation in higher education pesantren.

CONCLUSION

The tahfizh Al-Qur'an program at Pesma Al-Manar Ponorogo functions as a structured and adaptive mechanism for developing the religious character

of university students through the integration of Qur'anic memorization, worship habituation, mentoring, and residential religious culture. Its principal contribution lies in demonstrating that tahfizh can move beyond memorization achievement by connecting cognitive mastery with ritual discipline, spiritual experience, religious knowledge, responsibility, and ethical behavior. The study also shows that institutional communication, competent mentors, differentiated learning, and follow up support are essential for sustaining the program amid students' academic and organizational demands. Theoretically, the findings strengthen the view that religious character develops through continuous interaction between structured practice, exemplary conduct, and institutional culture. Practically, the model offers a framework for student pesantren seeking to integrate Qur'anic education with university life while maintaining flexible pathways for students with different competencies and workloads. The study is limited by its single-site qualitative design, which restricts broader generalization. Future research should examine the long-term retention of religious character among alumni through longitudinal or comparative studies.

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