

## STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS VALUES THROUGH THE TAHFIDZ AL-QUR'AN PROGRAM IN RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF MODERNIZATION

*Intan Astina Dewi, Danny Abrianto*

Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi

Jl. Jendral Gatot Subroto KM. 4,5 Sei Sikambing, Medan, Sumatera Utara

Email: [intanastinadewi99@gmail.com](mailto:intanastinadewi99@gmail.com), [dannyabrianto@dosen.pancabudi.ac.id](mailto:dannyabrianto@dosen.pancabudi.ac.id)

**Abstract:** The moral crisis of the younger generation characterized by a decline in discipline, responsibility, and social care is a serious challenge for Islamic educational institutions to restore the role of education as a character builder. This study aims to describe the strategy of strengthening religious values through tahfidz Al-Qur'an activities at the Ar-Roja Bina Insani Foundation in Kisaran, North Sumatra. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with phenomenological methods, through interviews, observations, and documentation of foundation leaders, tahfidz ustaz, students, and parents. The results revealed five main strategies implemented: integration of memorization and understanding of verses, exemplary teachers in behavior, habituation of daily worship, active involvement of parents, and creation of a conducive religious environment. These strategies proved effective in fostering discipline, patience, honesty, and responsibility among students. This research confirms that the Qur'an tahfidz program is not just an effort to memorize, but a comprehensive Islamic character building medium. The implication is that the tahfidz program can be used as a model of religious character education that is adaptive and relevant in answering the moral challenges of modern society.

**Keywords:** Religious values, Qur'an memorization, Character building

**Abstrak:** Krisis moral generasi muda yang ditandai dengan menurunnya disiplin, tanggung jawab, dan kepedulian sosial menjadi tantangan serius bagi lembaga pendidikan Islam untuk mengembalikan peran pendidikan sebagai pembentuk karakter. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan strategi penguatan nilai religius melalui kegiatan tahfidz Al-Qur'an di Yayasan Ar-Roja Bina Insani Kisaran, Sumatera Utara. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode fenomenologis, melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi terhadap pimpinan yayasan, ustaz tahfidz, santri, serta orang tua. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan lima strategi utama yang diterapkan: integrasi hafalan dan pemahaman ayat, keteladanan guru dalam perilaku, pembiasaan ibadah harian, keterlibatan aktif orang tua, serta penciptaan lingkungan religius yang kondusif. Strategi ini terbukti efektif menumbuhkan kedisiplinan, kesabaran, kejujuran, dan tanggung jawab santri. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa program tahfidz Al-Qur'an bukan sekadar upaya menghafal, melainkan media pembentukan karakter Islami yang komprehensif. Implikasinya, program tahfidz dapat dijadikan model pendidikan karakter religius yang adaptif dan relevan dalam menjawab tantangan moral masyarakat modern.

**Kata Kunci:** Nilai religius, Tahfidz Qur'an, Pembentukan Karakter

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in shaping the character and personality of the nation's future generation (Abrianto, 2023). In the context of Indonesia, which has made belief in One God the main foundation of its national life, education is not only aimed at intellectual development but also at producing well-rounded individuals who are faithful, pious, and noble in character. Religious values, therefore, are not merely complementary to the national education system, but rather form the main foundation that guides all dimensions of learning and student development (Ismaraidha, 2024).

Massive modernization and globalization pose enormous challenges to efforts to instill religious values in the lives of the younger generation. The development of digital technology, social media, and fast-paced lifestyles have influenced the way Indonesian children and adolescents think, act, and behave. Many of them experience an identity crisis, lack spiritual awareness, and fall into deviant behavior due to the weak foundation of religious values within themselves. This phenomenon is a serious concern for educators, parents, and religious institutions, given its significant impact on the moral and social quality of the nation's future generations (Tumiran, 2020).

The Islamic educational approach that is considered to be an effective means of shaping religious character is the activity of memorizing the Qur'an. The activity of

memorizing the holy verses of the Qur'an not only has spiritual value, but also serves as a medium for training discipline, patience, responsibility, and love for religious teachings (Harahap et al., 2024). Unfortunately, there are still very few scientific studies that specifically and comprehensively examine the relationship between the activity of memorizing the Qur'an and the formation of religious values in students. Many Islamic education theories only highlight the cognitive and spiritual aspects of memorization, without discussing in depth how Qur'anic values are strategically internalized into the daily lives of students (Wanto & Jalwis, 2021).

Furthermore, most studies on Al-Qur'an memorization in Islamic boarding schools or educational institutions still focus on memorization achievements, memorization methods, and student motivation. Not many of these studies explore the coaching process and strategies used to instill religious values in the practice of memorization education. As a result, there is a gap between the noble goals of tahfidz education and the reality on the ground, where there are still students who memorize because of pressure, not because of awareness; as well as students who do not yet understand the meaning of the verses they memorize, so that Qur'anic values do not fully color their behavior and attitudes (Herlina, 2024).

The Ar-Roja Bina Insani Kisaran Foundation, consisting of a kindergarten, an integrated Islamic elementary school, and an integrated Islamic junior high

school located in Asahan Regency, North Sumatra, is one of the Islamic educational institutions that consistently develops the Al-Qur'an tahfidz program as the main strategy in fostering a Qur'anic generation. The focus of this study is the integrated Islamic junior high school, because in practice, several problems are still found, such as a weak understanding of the memorized verses and motivation that does not fully arise from personal awareness. This shows that the success of the tahfidz program does not only depend on the quantity of memorization, but also on the right strategy in internalizing Qur'anic values into the lives of students.

Based on this reality, this study aims to systematically explore how the Qur'an memorization activity is implemented at the Ar-Roja Bina Insani Foundation, the strategies used to instill religious values, and the extent to which the program influences the character building of students. The religious values referred to in this study are not only understood as normative knowledge about Islamic teachings, but also as values reflected in real behavior, such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, compassion, tolerance, and simplicity.

Distinctively, this research occupies an important position among previous studies by emphasizing the integration between the dimensions of memorization, understanding the meaning of verses, and internalizing values in the context of modern educational institutions. The research by Amir (2019) and Wulandari &

Nida (2025) focuses more on tahfidz learning methods, while Naziyah & Gufron (2025) and Wijayanti & Kurniawan (2025) emphasize the formation of religious character in primary education. Meanwhile, Sholihah, Afif, & Partono (2025) link tahfidz with the challenges of the digital age, this study offers a holistic approach that combines cognitive, affective, and contextual aspects in shaping the religious character of adolescents. Thus, the contribution of this study lies in the development of a more systematic and applicable model of strategies for strengthening religious values based on tahfidz in the context of secondary Islamic education.

This study also examines various important aspects that support the successful internalization of religious values, such as daily coaching patterns, tahfidz methods (e.g., *talaqqi*, *tikrar*, *sima'an*, and *muroja'ah*), the role of tahfidz mentors or musyrif, parental involvement, and the support of a conducive pesantren environment. It is hoped that through this study, applicable and relevant strategies will be found to make Al-Qur'an memorization activities an effective instrument for religious character building amid the dynamics and challenges of the times.

Theoretically, this research makes an important contribution to the development of Islamic education studies, particularly in expanding the understanding of an integrative model between Al-Qur'an memorization and

character building based on religious values. This study emphasizes that tahfidz activities are not only cognitive activities oriented towards the ability to memorize verses, but also an affective learning process that instills moral and spiritual values through interactions between teachers, students, and the pesantren environment. These findings enrich the theoretical knowledge of Islamic education by adding a new perspective on the synergy between the spiritual and pedagogical dimensions in the development of students' religious character. Practically, this research provides applicable guidelines for Islamic educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools, and madrasas to optimize tahfidz activities as instruments of character building. Ideally, tahfidz programs should not only emphasize the quantity of memorization, but also the quality of understanding, internalization of meaning, and application of Qur'anic values in daily behavior. Thus, the results of this study can be used as a reference for in designing a holistic tahfidz curriculum, shaping students who are not only spiritually intelligent, but also noble, disciplined, and responsible in social life.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological descriptive method oriented towards a deep understanding of the real experiences of those involved in Al-Qur'an memorization activities at the Ar-Roja Bina Insani Foundation in Kisaran, North

Sumatra. This approach was chosen because the research not only sought to describe the phenomenon theoretically but also attempted to explore the meaning and concrete practices of religious value strengthening strategies applied in the context of secondary Islamic education.

The research was conducted directly in the field by involving a number of informants who were considered to understand and be actively involved in tahfidz activities, including the foundation leaders as policy makers, the tahfidz ustaz and ustazah as the implementers of the guidance, the santri as the beneficiaries and main actors of the activities, and the parents who observed the impact of the guidance in the family environment. The main data was obtained through direct interaction with the informants, while supporting data was collected from internal foundation documents such as the curriculum, tahfidz schedule, student progress reports, and archives of religious activities.

The data collection process was carried out using three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore information openly about the strategies, obstacles, and impacts of the tahfidz program on the formation of the students' religious character. Observations were made by following the daily activities of tahfidz and recording teacher-student interactions, coaching patterns, and religious habits

that developed within the foundation. Meanwhile, documentation studies were used to reinforce the results of observations and interviews with relevant written data.

The collected data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model (2014), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by sorting important information according to the research focus, then presented in the form of thematic narratives to facilitate interpretation of meaning, and finally concluded to find patterns, strategies, and educational implications that emerged from the tahfidz practice. To ensure data validity, this study applied source and method triangulation, namely by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents from various informants so that the results are credible and scientifically accountable.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Qur'an memorization program is characterized by the instillation of religious values**

The results of the study show that the Qur'an memorization program at SMP IT Ar-Roja Bina Insani not only functions as a memorization activity but also as a medium for shaping religious character that is integrated into all school activities. The religious atmosphere is evident from the morning, when students start the day with communal prayers, reading the

Qur'an, and performing the dhuha prayer. These activities become habits that shape spiritual rhythms and strengthen the internalization of Qur'anic values in students. The habit of congregational worship, polite interaction with teachers, and the application of Islamic manners in every activity show that religious values have become part of the school culture.

The tahfidz program is implemented systematically through the methods of talaqqi, muroja'ah, tikrar, and sima'an. Each student is required to recite their memorization regularly under the guidance of the tahfidz teacher. Field findings show that the personal relationship between the teacher and the student is the key to success. Teachers not only act as memorization examiners, but also serve as spiritual role models who instill noble character. In each memorization session, teachers often insert moral advice and religious motivation, creating a warm and religious learning atmosphere. This confirms that the strategy of value formation does not stand alone but is closely intertwined with the entire tahfidz education process (Elbanna & Muthoifin, 2024; Hariyani & Rafik, 2021; Salsabila et al., 2025).

This program demonstrates relevance to Islamic education theory, which emphasizes balance between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Memorizing the Qur'an is not merely a memory exercise, but also a spiritual process that cultivates perseverance, discipline, sincerity, and

personal responsibility. The tahfidz process trains students to be patient, focused, and steadfast, as taught in the Qur'an surah Al-Baqarah verse 286 and the Qur'an surah Adz-Dzariyat verse 56, which affirm the purpose of human creation as servants of Allah. Thus, the tahfidz activity becomes a place for students to practice self-control and interpret each verse as a guideline for life.

In addition, the internalization of religious values is also reflected in social practices within the school environment. Students involved in the tahfidz program tend to exhibit discipline, politeness, and concern for their friends. Teachers refer to this change as the "non-verbal result of memorization," namely the emergence of Islamic behavior that grows naturally from the habit of interacting with the Qur'an. Values such as honesty, trustworthiness, patience, and tawakal (trust in God) become part of the students' personalities. This is in line with the views of Shihab (2002) and Ulwan (2013), who state that tahfidz is an effective means of character building through repeated spiritual and moral training.

Thus, the results of this study show that SMP IT Ar-Roja Bina Insani has successfully developed a tahfidz model characterized by the instillation of religious values through consistent habituation, exemplary behavior, and spiritual interaction. This model not only produces strong cognitive memorizers of the Qur'an, but also nurtures a generation with Qur'anic morals who are able to

translate their memorization into real behavior at school and in society. The tahfiz program is clear evidence that Quranic education, when managed comprehensively, can be a driving force for the formation of an authentic and sustainable Islamic character (Lubis, 2018; Lubis et al., 2019).

### **Strategies for Instilling Religious Values through Qur'an Memorization**

The results of the study indicate that the strategy for instilling religious values at SMP IT Ar-Roja Bina Insani is carried out through a systematic and comprehensive approach, integrating tahfiz activities with the spiritual, moral, and social development of students. Based on observations and interviews with the school principal, tahfiz teachers, and parents of students, the researchers found that the main strategy applied involved synergy between strengthening memorization, understanding the meaning of verses, teacher role modeling, habitual worship, and family collaboration. This strategy does not stand alone but complements each other in shaping students' religious character gradually and continuously.

The integration of memorization and understanding of the meaning of verses is an important aspect of the strategy for shaping religious values. In each tahfidz session, teachers not only require students to memorize the text of the Qur'an, but also explain the brief interpretation and moral values contained

therein. Students are encouraged to understand the meaning of the verses they memorize, such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and compassion. Researchers found that this understanding of meaning helps students internalize the messages of the Qur'an into real behavior, such as being more polite to teachers and more caring towards their peers. Meaningful memorization makes tahfidz not just a ritual of repeating verses, but also a process of spiritual transformation.

The role of the tahfidz teacher is key to this strategy. Field findings show that teachers not only serve as memorization instructors, but also as moral and spiritual role models. Teachers' exemplary behavior is reflected in their daily conduct: observing the obligatory five daily prayers, speaking gently, and showing patience in guiding students. Students observe and imitate this behavior in their lives at the boarding school and at home. Researchers note that this exemplary approach functions as "education by action," which is more effective than verbal advice. In Islamic educational theory, this is in line with the concept of *uswah hasanah* as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad, who taught that exemplary behavior is the most powerful means of shaping character (Ahariani et al., 2025; Syah et al., 2025; Wafi et al., 2023).

In addition, habitual worship is an integral part of the strategy for instilling religious values. Students are accustomed

to performing congregational prayers, reciting zikr after prayers, reading daily prayers, and participating in Quran recitation activities every morning. These activities foster spiritual discipline and create strong religious habits. Researchers observed that the religious behavior of santri is formed through consistent repetition of worship, until it becomes part of their character. This supports the theory of moral habituation, which states that habits that are repeated in a spiritual environment will transform into permanent character traits.

The next strategy is family involvement in the process of instilling religious values. The Foundation maintains active communication with parents through memorization progress reports and monthly meetings. Researchers found that students who received support from their parents at home, such as being reminded to do muroja'ah or invited to pray in congregation, showed more significant progress in both memorization and behavior. This shows that collaboration between schools and families is an important foundation in strengthening Qur'anic values outside the school environment.

In terms of policy, the institution implements disciplinary rules that support a religious culture, such as the obligation to dress Islamically, restrictions on the use of electronic devices, and the provision of adequate worship facilities. This policy is not merely an

administrative regulation, but part of the institution's strategy to create a learning atmosphere conducive to the growth of students' spirituality. The researchers noted that a religious school environment encourages students to maintain good manners, speak politely, and adjust their behavior to Islamic values.

These findings reinforce the theory put forward by Rahmadani and Al Hamdany (2023) that the success of the tahfidz program depends not only on methodological aspects but also on comprehensive spiritual guidance. In the context of SMP IT Ar-Roja Bina Insani, an integrative strategy that includes memorization, understanding, role modeling, habituation, and family partnership has proven effective in fostering students' religious character. This program not only produces Qur'an memorizers who are cognitively strong, but also Muslim individuals who are disciplined, honest, patient, and responsible. Thus, the strategy of instilling religious values through Qur'an memorization at SMP IT Ar-Roja Bina Insani can be a relevant model of Qur'anic education to strengthen the morality of the younger generation in the modern era.

### **The impact of the Qur'an memorization program on changes in student character**

The results of the study show that the Qur'an memorization program at SMP IT Ar-Roja Bina Insani has a real impact on changes in student character, both in

terms of discipline, responsibility, and spiritual attitude. Based on field observations and interviews with teachers, parents, and students, it was found that memorization activities not only improve memorization skills but also have a significant effect on students' daily behavior. Students have become more disciplined in managing their time, more careful in their speech, and have shown an increase in politeness and respect towards teachers and parents. Teachers mentioned that some students who were previously often late are now more punctual in attending congregational prayers and memorization classes. Parents also acknowledged changes in their children's attitudes at home, such as being more diligent in helping out, more polite in communicating, and more concerned about daily worship.

These changes occurred because the process of memorizing the Qur'an requires patience, consistency, and a high degree of self-control. Students who successfully overcame the difficulties of memorizing verse by verse indirectly internalized the values of patience, perseverance, and honesty. Researchers note that these values do not stop at the cognitive level but are manifested in real behavior. This phenomenon is in line with Ulwan's view (2013), which emphasizes that Qur'an-based education functions as a process of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul) that shapes character through continuous spiritual and moral training. Thus, tahfidz activities become an



effective vehicle for the formation of a strong religious personality.

However, behind this success, this study also found several challenges that affect the effectiveness of the program. Some students experience fatigue due to their busy schedules, which include general lessons, memorization, and worship activities. This condition causes some students to experience a decline in motivation or stagnation in memorization. In addition, researchers found that there are students who participate in the tahfidz program due to external pressures, such as the wishes of their parents or social pressures, rather than personal awareness. This causes their enthusiasm to fluctuate, especially when they encounter difficulties in memorization. The learning environment is also an important factor. The limited availability of comfortable memorization spaces makes it difficult for some students to concentrate optimally (Manshuruddin et al., 2019).

Parental involvement also influences the impact of the tahfidz program on character building. Not all parents are able to provide intensive guidance due to work commitments. Researchers note that students who receive consistent family support show more stable progress in memorization and religious behavior. Conversely, a lack of parental attention results in slow progress in memorization and weak discipline at home. This shows that the success of religious character building does not only

depend on school activities, but also requires continuity of values between home and educational institutions. In other words, religious character education must be based on cooperation between schools and families.

Thematic analysis of field data shows that the impact of the *tahfidz* program on changes in student character can be seen from three main dimensions. First, the cognitive-spiritual dimension, where students not only memorize verses but also understand their content as guidelines for life. Second, the affective dimension — namely, the growth of love for the Qur'an and the urge to do good. Third, the psychomotor dimension, which refers to tangible behavioral changes in the form of discipline, patience, and responsibility. These findings reinforce the view that character building through *tahfidz* is not an instant result but a gradual process influenced by a conducive spiritual environment. At SMP IT Ar-Roja Bina Insani, the religious environment built through congregational prayers, collective remembrance of God, and warm teacher-student interactions are dominant factors in shaping a Qur'anic personality.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the Al-Qur'an tahfidz program has a positive impact on the transformation of students' character at SMP IT Ar-Roja Bina Insani. However, its effectiveness is highly dependent on collaboration between teachers, parents, and institutional policies. The exemplary

role of teachers as spiritual figures, emotional and spiritual support from families, and a religious school environment form a holistic education system. The researcher's reflection shows that an ideal tahfidz program is not only oriented towards memorization

achievements but also towards the formation of students' morality and spirituality. With a sustainable strategy, such a program has great potential to produce a Qur'anic generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also spiritually mature and noble in character.

**Table 1.** Analysis of Findings and Novelty of Research

Research Aspect	Main Findings	Theory and Novelty
Tahfidz as a medium for religious character building	The tahfidz program is an integrative means of instilling Qur'anic values, not merely memorization.	Supported by the theory of holistic Islamic education (Ahmad Tafsir, 2017); discovering a tahfidz model based on religious habits in modern schools.
Teacher exemplarity ( <i>Uswah Hasanah</i> )	Teachers serve as moral and spiritual role models for students.	In line with the theory of <i>uswah hasanah</i> (Asari, 2012; Ulwan, 2013); this emphasizes the effectiveness of teacher role modeling in shaping students' religious behavior.
Integration of memorization and understanding of the meaning of verses	Memorization accompanied by brief interpretation and reflection on moral values.	Supported by religious constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) ; introducing the concept of "meaningful memorization".
Habituation of worship and religious habits	Routine worship activities foster spiritual discipline.	In line with the theory of moral habituation (Lickona, 1991) ; proving the effectiveness of habituation in tahfidz education in public schools.
Synergy between school and family	Family collaboration supports the effectiveness of character formation.	Supporting Bronfenbrenner's (1979) educational ecology theory, which emphasizes the crucial role of parents in formal Qur'anic education.
Student character transformation	Students become more disciplined, patient, honest, and responsible.	In line with the concept of <i>tazkiyatun nafs</i> (Al-Ghazali, 2020); providing empirical evidence of the religious character transformation of junior high school students.
The spiritual environment of the school	A religious atmosphere creates an ecosystem for the formation of Qur'anic character.	Supported by the theory of the Islamic environment (Shihab, 2002); identifying the religious ecosystem as a dominant factor in character formation.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the strategy of strengthening religious values through Al-Qur'an memorization activities at the Ar-Roja Bina Insani Kisaran Foundation has proven effective in shaping the religious character of students. The memorization program not only produces memorization, but also trains patience, discipline, honesty, and responsibility. The success of the program is supported by an integrative strategy that includes understanding the meaning of verses, teacher role modeling, habitual worship, parental involvement, and the creation of a religious environment. However, challenges such as extrinsic motivation, student fatigue, limited facilities, and inconsistent parental roles remain obstacles. Therefore, continuous efforts are needed to strengthen collaboration between schools and families, as well as to improve facilities that support learning comfort. Al-Qur'an memorization activities can be positioned as a relevant and applicable religious character education strategy in facing the moral challenges of the younger generation in the modern era. The implications of this study indicate that the integrative model of memorization and character building through the " " can be used as a reference in the development of Islamic education curricula in various institutions. Additionally, the results of this study can serve as a basis for education policymakers to design religious value-

based learning programs that are more contextual, sustainable, and adaptive to the socio-cultural changes of modern society.

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