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CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS IN ENHANCING THEIR QURAN READING SKILLS

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi cara meningkatkan kemampuan membaca Al-Quran serta memahami kendala yang dihadapi oleh peserta didik dalam memperbaiki kemampuan tersebut di SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif (Field Research). Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Sebagian besar peserta didik telah mengenal keutamaan membaca Al-Quran, namun pengetahuan tersebut masih perlu diperkaya lagi. Selain itu, adab dalam membaca Al-Quran umumnya telah diketahui oleh peserta didik, tetapi informasi yang dimiliki masih belum lengkap dan memerlukan penambahan. Dalam aspek ilmu tajwid, pengetahuan teoretis peserta didik berada pada kategori cukup, tetapi masih harus ditingkatkan, terutama pengetahuan mengenai hukum mad, idgham, ikhfa, dan lainnya.

Kata Kunci: Kemampuan Membaca Al-Quran, Peserta Didik

Abstract

This study aims to identify methods for enhancing Quran reading skills and understanding students' challenges in improving these abilities at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam. A qualitative research method with a descriptive approach (Field Research) is utilized. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Most students are familiar with the virtues of reading the Quran, yet this knowledge requires further enrichment. Moreover, the students generally know the etiquette of reading the Quran, but their information is still incomplete and needs additional details. Regarding the science of Tajwid, students' theoretical knowledge falls within an adequate category. Still, it needs improvement, particularly in understanding the rules of elongation (mad), merging (idgham), hiding (ikhfa), and others.

Keywords: Al-Quran Reading Skill, Student

INTRODUCTION

In Islamic teachings, there are two primary sources of law for Muslims: the Quran and the Hadith. The term "Quran" originates from the Arabic language, where it is the infinitive (noun) form of the verb "qara'a," meaning "to read." In technical terms, the Quran is the holy book revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through the intermediary of the angel Gabriel. It was revealed in stages as a miracle and the final testament, completing and perfecting the scriptures given to previous prophets. It serves as a guide and directive for all of humanity. The Quran comprises 30 volumes, 114 chapters, and 6,236 verses. Reading the Quran requires a deep understanding and knowledge of the proper techniques, including the rules of Tajwid and the points of articulation (makharij al-huruf), as well as the characteristics of the letters to avoid errors in pronunciation that could lead to misinterpretations or even change the meaning of the verses being read. The more frequently a person reads and studies the Quran, the more proficient they become in incorporating its recitation into daily life. "The ability to read the Quran is a complex activity that involves both physical and mental effort," notes Al-Bahru (2023). A person is considered capable of reading the Quran when they can read, pronounce, and understand the verses slowly and clearly according to the established rules of Quranic recitation, which include the laws of Tajwid, the points of articulation of letters (makharij al-huruf), the characteristics of the letters, and more.

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According to the Director of Islamic Religion at Kemenag, Zayadi, the Quran Literacy Index 2023 showed a significant score of 66.038, categorized as high, above the medium threshold of 60.00. Based on a descriptive analysis of 10,347 respondents across 34 provinces, it was found that the Quran Literacy Index in 2023 scored significantly high. The number of respondents in the survey also fell into a high category, with 61.52 percent being able to recognize the letters and diacritical marks of the Quran, 59.92 percent reading the arrangement of letters into words, and 48.96 percent reading verses fluently. As for reading the Quran fluently according to the basic rules of Tajwid and without errors reached a medium category at 44.57 percent (AntaraNews.com, 2023).

Based on these observations, it is evident that the data regarding the ability of the Indonesian community to fluently read the Quran according to basic Tajwid rules without mistakes is still relatively low. This is due to a lack of awareness about the importance of learning the Quran, which is unfortunate given that Islam is the majority religion in Indonesia, where the Quran is the principal source of Islamic teachings.

There is a pressing need to cultivate awareness about the importance of studying the Quran. Therefore, an educational process is essential to help the community read the Quran correctly and effectively. This educational process aims to nurture generations who are knowledgeable about the Quran, both in terms of reading and applying its teachings, thus raising children who possess good morals and are beneficial to their religion, society, nation, and country.

SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam is a junior high school established in Pagar Alam. Although it is not a religiously affiliated school, it strives to ensure its students can read the Quran correctly and adequately. However, several challenges are encountered by both teachers and students, resulting in some students still being unable to read the Quran correctly.

These facts were discovered during an interview with Mr. Sunhu Rasik, a teacher of Islamic Education. This interview found that many students are still unable to read the Quran according to the rules of Tajwid and the points of articulation due to a lack of parental attention, and the transition from childhood to adolescence makes them reluctant to learn the Quran at study sessions. Limited classroom time also poses a challenge, with only three hours per week allocated for this subject, further compounded by rapid technological advances leading to wasted time on mobile phones. Additionally, a lack of enthusiasm for Islamic Education among students poses further obstacles to developing their Quran reading skills.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive research approach (Field Research). The sampling techniques for data collection include interviews, observation, documentation, and further interviews.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Enhancing Quran Reading Skills among Students at SMP Negeri 1 Pagar Alam

During the interview stage, information was directly obtained from three Islamic Education teachers and students regarding enhancing Quran reading abilities at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam. The first interview was with Mr. Sunhu Rasik (2024), who stated: "Generally, the ability of students at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam to read the Quran is just adequate in my opinion—they can merely read but haven't reached a better level yet. As for the student's knowledge about the virtues of reading the Quran, although there is no specific time allocated, we always motivate and provide points about reading and writing the Quran, especially during Ramadan, the month of the Quran, where we also give much motivation about its virtues. The teaching of proper conduct in reading is scarce due to limited time. During practice, we directly handle the Quran or teach the relevant Quranic verses during the learning process. As for Tajwid knowledge, it is taught but without specific time allocated, and Tajwid topics typically come up in chapters during the learning process when Quranic verses are involved. Suitable methods for teaching the Quran here are simple due to time constraints, such as habitual practice. Peer tutoring also helps; for instance, when there are memorizations about Quranic verses, students learn with a peer with better pronunciation and Tajwid, then later present what they have learned to the teacher, fostering habitual practice."

The second interview was with Mr. Imam, the Islamic Education teacher and vice principal of student affairs at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam. Mr. Imam (2024) said: "According to Mr. Imam, 90% of the students at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam have good Quran reading abilities, though some are still at the Iqra level, but many have memorized parts of the Quran and their reading sessions are generally good, Insha'Allah. As for teaching the virtues of reading the Quran, although it's not emphasized in delivery, the curriculum includes specific materials about the virtues of reading the Quran in the second grade. The etiquettes of reading the Quran are usually taught during practical sessions, but there isn't much specialized material; it's more about understanding how to treat the Quran properly. Specific Tajwid knowledge is taught in eighth grade in the second semester, covering basic concepts like izhar, idghom, ikhfa, qolqolah, and so on, applied in segments of Quranic verses. The common method used here at the beginning is habitual practice, with one or two representatives from the class reading some Quranic verses."

The third interview was with Mrs. Hasfir, another Islamic Education teacher. Mrs. Hasfir (2024) mentioned: "The Quran reading ability of students at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam is quite good. The students have been taught the virtues of a Muslim in reading the Quran, the importance of proper conduct while reading, and the science of Tajwid in reading the Quran. The suitable method for teaching the Quran here is the Iqro method."

Based on the interviews with the three Islamic Education teachers, the researcher has drawn the following conclusions:

- a. The Quran reading ability of SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam students is adequate but limited mostly to essential reading without reaching a higher proficiency. Although most students are at the Iqro level, some have started memorizing or have memorized parts of the Quran (Tahfidz).
- b. Regarding teaching the virtues of reading the Quran, while the curriculum includes specific materials in the second grade, comprehensive delivery to all students is lacking due to time constraints. However, teachers seize every opportunity to motivate students about the virtues of reading the Quran.
- c. Teachers seldom teach the etiquettes of reading the Quran in a structured manner, but they discuss them during practical sessions. No specific material focuses solely on the etiquette of reading the Quran.
- d. Teachers have introduced the science of Tajwid, but no specific time is allocated for it. Tajwid is usually taught through chapters during the learning process that involve Quranic verses. Specific Tajwid material is covered in the second-grader semester, focusing on concepts like izhar, idghom, ikhfa, qolqolah, and others.
- e. The methods teachers use to instruct in Quran reading include habitual practice, peer tutoring, and the Iqro method.

The researcher also conducted structured interviews with a sample of students to explore ways to enhance their Quran reading skills. The results presented here include responses from three students whose answers were similar or nearly identical. *Bagian Atas Formulir*

Here is the translation of the interviews with the students: Muhammad Zul Yahya (2024), a seventh-grader at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam, said: "I know a little about the virtues of reading the Quran. The Quran is a logical holy book containing many sciences that can be practiced daily. The Quran is a book that explains everything in the world, and its virtues include the forgiveness of sins, calming of the soul, and provision of sustenance. Regarding the etiquette of reading the Quran, yes, I have studied it. I know that one must use Tajwid knowledge, perform ablution before reading, and read correctly and well. Regarding Tajwid, I have studied it, and I know it is the science that discusses how to read the Quran properly, including concepts like ikhfa, iqlab, izhar, natural prolongation (mad thabi'i), and permissible detached prolongation (mad jaiz munfasil). In my opinion, the methods taught by the teachers are sufficient."

Skandy Navia Lor Barus (2024), an eighth-grader, said: "I have studied the virtues of reading the Quran, but I do not know much about them. The virtues of reading the Quran include not reading too quickly, knowing the Hijaiyah letters, reading according to punctuation, and not hurrying. I have learned a bit about the etiquettes, such as reading the ta'awudz before reading the basmalah and the Quran. If a woman, it is better to wear a hijab or prayer garment and

perform ablution first; it is better to read melodiously and use a stand for the Quran so it is not at the same level as one's feet. I have studied Tajwid before, but I do not understand it well. I have studied it but have forgotten it and rarely study it now. The methods applied by the teachers to enhance the Quran reading skills do not help much because the methods are not focused only on Quran learning."

Arya Bima Pratama (2024), a student in class VIII H, said: "I have studied and know about the virtues of reading the Quran, including receiving rewards from Allah, obtaining mercy from Allah, and increasing religious knowledge. I know the etiquette for studying the Quran, such as performing ablution before reading, handling the Quran with the right hand, and kissing the Quran after reading it. I have studied Tajwid and know concepts such as natural prolongation (mad thabi'i), soft prolongation (mad layin), iqlab, izhar, substituted prolongation (mad badal), merging with nasal sound (idgham bighunnah), merging without nasal sound (idgham bilaghunnah), merging of 'mim' (idgham mimi), concealed pronunciation (ikhfa syafawi), and clear pronunciation (izhar syafawi). In my opinion, The methods teachers apply to help improve Quran reading skills are insufficient."

Based on the interviews conducted with students at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam to understand the improvements in their Quran reading skills, the findings are as follows:

- a. Most students know the virtues of reading the Quran, such as forgiveness of sins, receiving God's mercy, and calming the soul, though their knowledge is not extensive.
- b. Many students know the etiquettes of reading the Quran, such as performing ablution before reading, saying the ta'awudz, placing the Quran on a stand so it is not at the same level as the feet, and holding it with the right hand.
- c. Knowledge of Tajwid has been taught but only superficially, and it is seldom revisited. Students have generally learned but often forget, although some can articulate a few topics from Tajwid, such as mad thabi'i, mad layin, izhar, mad badal, idgham, and others.
- d. The teaching methods teachers employ are not seen as particularly helpful in enhancing Quran reading skills because the methods do not focus exclusively on Quran learning.

From the data collected through observation and interviews at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam, the researcher draws the following conclusions about the student's abilities in reading the Quran:

- a. The fluency and proficiency of students in reading the Quran are generally inadequate, although they can read to some extent. However, the correct articulation and characteristics of the letters are not well applied.
- b. The students mostly recognize the knowledge of the virtues of reading the Quran, but it is incomplete, as detailed in Chapter II of the researcher's report.
- c. Knowledge of the etiquette of reading the Quran is generally known among the students but is not as comprehensive as detailed in Chapter II.
- d. The theoretical knowledge of Tajwid among the students is adequate. Still, it needs enhancement, as the focus has largely been on the rules of elongation and merging, with little attention to the articulation and characteristics of the letters, both theoretically and practically.
- e. The methods applied by teachers to enhance the Quran reading skills of students include the Iqro method, habitual practice, and peer tutoring. Yet, students find these methods not helpful because the instruction is not focused solely on Quran reading.

The challenges faced by students in enhancing their Quran reading skills at SMP Negeri 1 Pagar Alam

In this section, the researcher presents the results of interviews regarding the challenges students face in improving their Quran reading skills at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam. The first interview was with Mr. Sunhu Rasik, an Islamic Education teacher, who noted that the main problem is the students' lack of interest in the Quran, possibly influenced by social media and a heavy school curriculum that leaves little time for Quran study. He mentioned that the school facilities, although improving, are still insufficient given the number of students. He also highlighted the significant influence of family involvement in students' Quranic education, suggesting that parental encouragement for regular Quran study at home is crucial.

The second interview was with Mr. Imam, an Islamic Education teacher and vice principal, who pointed out that the students' willingness is essential. The school has a monthly program

for collective Quran reading, which helps, and the curriculum transition from 2013 to the 'Merdeka Curriculum' focuses on teacher role models to motivate students. He confirmed that the school has adequate facilities for Quran learning, including sufficient Qurans and a prayer area. He emphasized the importance of parental involvement, especially for students who need additional support outside school hours.

The third interview was with Mrs. Hasfir, another Islamic Education teacher, who stated that many students struggle with recognizing Hijaiyah letters and mastering Tajwid. She believes the current curriculum effectively enhances Quran reading skills and is supported by adequate school facilities. Parents and the community are also crucial in supporting students' Quran learning.

Based on the interviews conducted with three teachers, the researcher concludes the following:

- a. There is a lack of interest and willingness among students to improve their Quran reading skills. Additionally, they struggle with recognizing Hijaiyah letters and mastering Tajwid. This could be due to the influence of social media and the extensive curriculum that needs to be covered in a limited time. However, SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam has initiatives to foster interest in the Quran, such as a monthly program where students read the Quran together on the first week.
- b. The current school curriculum is not effectively enhancing students' Quran reading skills due to the broad scope of material teachers must cover and the transition from the 2013 curriculum to the 'Merdeka' curriculum. Teachers need to serve as role models in delivering Quran teachings to motivate students to engage with and learn from the Quran.
- c. The school facilities, including a prayer area (mushola) and available Qurans, are insufficient for the number of students, although efforts are made annually to supplement these resources.
- d. Teachers agree that parental involvement and the home environment are crucial in enhancing children's Quran reading abilities. They find that students who excel in Quran reading often have active support from their parents. Parents of less proficient students are informed about the need for private lessons in their local community so school efforts can focus on refining and correcting.
- e. While there is no specific evaluation for Quran reading within the Islamic Education material, teachers assess students' recitation during practical activities like prayer, where Quranic verses such as Surah Al-Fatihah are included, showing that Quran learning is integrated into the broader Islamic Education curriculum.

The researcher conducted structured interviews with students to assess their challenges in improving their Quran reading skills. The findings, which are based on the responses from three students who gave similar or nearly identical answers, are summarized below:

Muhammad Zul Yahya (2024), a student in class VII B, mentioned: "I face challenges in improving my Quran reading abilities, including a lack of Quran teachers and not having enough time. My interest and motivation to enhance my reading skills at school are good. Teachers have supported the improvement of my Quran reading through activities like class meetings during Ramadan. The facilities and curriculum the school provided helped me improve my Quran reading abilities, and my family and community also support me."

Muhammad Al-Fatih (2024), a student in class VIII G, said: "The main challenge in improving my Quran reading is mastering the articulation points of the letters. My interest and motivation for improving my Quran reading are not very strong, but teachers play a crucial role in enhancing my abilities. The facilities provided by the school are not enough to help improve my reading of the Quran. However, my family and community support me in enhancing my Quran reading skills."

Ramadhan Agustian (2024), a student in class VIII I, stated: "I face challenges in improving my Quran reading skills, including mastering Tajwid and the articulation points of the letters. I am very interested and motivated to enhance my Quran reading. However, the teachers have not significantly helped improve my Quran reading, and the school's curriculum does not assist me in improving. The school facilities provided for improving Quran reading are adequate. My family and the community support my efforts to improve my Quran reading."

Based on the interviews with three students, the researcher has drawn the following conclusions regarding the challenges students face in improving their Quran reading skills:

- a. The challenges include a lack of dedicated Quran teachers, insufficient time, and difficulties in learning Tajwid, such as mastering the articulation points of letters.
- b. Interest and motivation among students to improve their Quran reading skills vary; some are very interested, some moderately, while others show little interest.
- c. Students have mixed opinions about the role of teachers in enhancing their Quran reading abilities. Some feel that teachers play a significant role, while others think teachers have not yet significantly contributed to improving their skills.
- d. Regarding the curriculum, some students feel that it adequately supports their learning, while others believe it does not help much in enhancing their Quran reading skills.
- e. The facilities provided by the school for Quran learning are viewed differently by students; some find them sufficient, while others think they are inadequate.
- f. parents, family, and community support is generally positive, helping students improve their Quran reading skills.

From the data gathered through observations and interviews, the researcher concludes that the main challenges in enhancing students' Quran reading abilities are:

- a. A lack of interest and willingness from students to learn and improve their Quran reading.
- b. The school curriculum is not sufficiently supportive of students' Quran reading development; it is overloaded with content that teachers need to cover, and there is no specific focus on Quran learning, such as BTA (basic Tajwid application).
- c. The time allocated for learning is not effectively enhancing students' Quran reading skills, compounded by the fact that the teaching is not solely focused on Islamic Education.
- d. School facilities for enhancing Quran reading need further improvement. Although the school provides prayer spaces and Qurans, these facilities are inadequate compared to the number of students. There is also a lack of specialized Quran teachers.
- e. While parental and community support is available, it is mostly verbal encouragement rather than practical actions like taking children to the mosque for lessons or setting a personal example in Quran reading.

SUMMARY

The Quran reading proficiency levels among students at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Pagar Alam are generally not fluent or smooth, especially in terms of reading, and the articulation points (makhraj) and characteristics of letters (sifatul huruf) are not yet fully implemented. While most students know the virtues of reading the Quran, their knowledge needs further enhancement. Similarly, while students generally know the etiquette of reading the Quran, this knowledge is incomplete and requires additional depth.

The students' theoretical knowledge of Tajwid is adequate, covering basic rules such as the laws of elongation (mad), merging (idgham), and hiding (ikhfa), but it needs to be deepened as many only know the basics. The students' lack of interest and willingness to learn and improve Quran reading is apparent. The school curriculum does not sufficiently support improving Quran reading skills. There is too much material to cover and no specific focus on Quranic learning such as BTA (basic Tajwid application) or systematic Quran reading and writing.

The allocated learning time is not effectively enhancing the students' Quran reading skills, further complicated by the fact that the instruction is not solely focused on Islamic Education. The facilities provided by the school, such as prayer spaces and Qurans, need improvement, as they are insufficient for the number of students. Additionally, there is a lack of specialized Quran teachers.

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