

Challenges and Strategies of Quranic Teachers in Teaching Students at Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract

Quranic learning in Islamic boarding schools plays a vital role in developing students' ability to read, understand, and practice the values of the Quran in their daily lives. However, teachers often encounter various challenges that may affect the effectiveness of the learning process. This study aims to analyze the challenges faced by Quranic teachers and examine the strategies they employ in teaching students at Islamic boarding schools. This research adopted a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation and were analyzed descriptively. The findings reveal that teachers face several challenges, including differences in students' abilities to read and comprehend the Quran, classroom management issues, and the need to provide equal attention to all students during the learning process. To address these challenges, teachers implement various strategies, such as applying diverse teaching methods, organizing learning groups, utilizing peer tutoring, providing intensive guidance, and employing engaging learning media. These strategies contribute to increased student motivation, participation, and learning effectiveness. The study highlights the importance of adaptive and student-centered teaching strategies in supporting the successful implementation of Quranic learning in Islamic boarding schools.

INTRODUCTION

Quran instruction is one of the fundamental aspects of Islamic education, aimed at developing students' ability to read, understand, and practice Islamic teachings comprehensively (Akhmar et al., 2021). The ability to read the Quran is a basic competency that every Muslim must possess because the Quran is a guide to life that provides guidance for humanity. This is as stated by Allah SWT in Surah Al-'Alaq 1-5:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ
خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ
اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ
الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ
عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

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Meaning: *Recite in the name of your Lord who created. Created man from a clinging substance. Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous. Who taught by the pen. Taught man that which he knew not* (QS. Al-‘Alaq: 1-5)

This verse emphasizes the importance of the learning process, reading, and the advancement of knowledge as part of Islamic education. Furthermore, Allah the Almighty also states in Surah Al-Qamar, verse 17:

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

Meaning: *And We have certainly made the Qur'an easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember?* (QS. Al-Qamar: 17)

This verse indicates that the study of the Quran must be conducted systematically and continuously so that students can understand and apply its teachings in their daily lives.

In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) play a strategic role as institutions that not only teach Islamic studies but also shape students' character and spirituality through Quranic education. As the number of students from diverse educational backgrounds and with varying abilities increases, the process of Quranic education faces increasingly complex challenges (Engkizar et al., 2025). Some students are already able to read the Quran fluently in accordance with the rules of tajwid, while others still struggle to recognize the Hijaiyah letters, the articulation points (*makbarij al-buruf*), and the rules of recitation. This heterogeneity in ability requires Quran teachers to implement adaptive teaching strategies so that all students have optimal learning opportunities (Shukri et al., 2020).

Various previous studies have shown that success in learning the Quran is greatly influenced by the methods and strategies teachers employ. Hamdani, (2018) found that the *tilawati* method can improve fluency in reading the Quran when supported by adequate teacher competence. Similar results were also reported by Izzan & Albarokah, (2024), who explained that the classical and individual approaches within the Tilawati method are effective in improving students' Quran reading skills. Furthermore, Khoiruddin & Kustiani, (2020) concluded that the implementation of the Tilawati method can improve learning motivation and Quranic reading skills, although challenges remain in providing intensive guidance to certain students.

Research on the *Iqra'* method also indicates a significant impact on improving Quranic reading skills. Rangkuti & Mahariah, (2024) found that the *Iqra'* method makes a positive contribution to students' ability to read the Quran. These findings are supported by (Srijatun, 2017), who stated that the application of the *Iqra'* method helps students understand Quranic recitation more easily and systematically. Meanwhile, Saputra et al., (2024) explains that the success of the *Iqra'* method in improving Quranic reading skills is still influenced by factors such as learning motivation, limited learning time, and differences in students' abilities.

Another study focused on the implementation of the *Qiraati* method in Quran instruction. Zulfikar, (2019) explain that the *Qiraati* method effectively improves Quran reading skills because it emphasizes the accuracy of tajwid, fluency in recitation, and gradual learning tailored to students' ability levels. Research by Khotiah, (2020) also shows that the *Qiraati* method helps improve the quality of Quran recitation through structured group and individual instruction. On the other hand, Umam & Masruroh, (2025) found that grouping students based on their proficiency levels is a key factor in the success of Quran instruction using the *Qiraati* method.

In addition to the use of learning methods, other studies highlight the importance of peer tutoring strategies in addressing differences in students' abilities. Habibullah et al., (2021) found that the implementation of peer tutoring can improve Quran reading skills through more structured peer-to-peer support. These findings are reinforced by Camma et al., (2020), who explains that peer tutors help students with lower ability

levels adapt more quickly to Quran learning. Furthermore, [Arini & Widawarsih, \(2022\)](#) demonstrate that the peer tutoring method effectively improves reading fluency, accuracy in tajwid, and students' motivation to learn within the pesantren environment.

In general, previous studies have focused primarily on the effectiveness of various Quran teaching methods in improving students' learning outcomes. The results of these studies indicate that the *tilawati*, *igra'*, *qiraati*, and peer-tutoring methods can improve students' ability to read the Quran when implemented properly. However, the success of a method is determined not only by the characteristics of the method itself but also by the teacher's ability to manage students with varying skill levels. In practice, teachers often face challenges in dividing their attention, adapting the material, determining learning strategies, and maintaining the engagement of all students throughout the learning process.

A search of the Scopus database for studies on teaching methods and the challenges faced by teachers found 11 documents from the year 2026. The analysis clearly shows that no studies have yet been found related to Challenges and Strategies of Quranic Teachers in Teaching Students. Below is a visualization of the VOSviewer bibliometric analysis based on the themes of teaching strategies, learning the Quran, and Islamic boarding schools.



Fig. 1. Vosviewer visualization analysis of studies on Quran teachers based on keywords (Scopus database, 2020–2026)

Although numerous studies have been conducted on Quran teaching methods, most of these studies still focus on the effectiveness of these methods in improving students' ability to read the Quran. Meanwhile, research specifically examining the challenges faced by Quran teachers in dealing with the heterogeneity of students' abilities as well as the strategies used to address these differences remains relatively limited. Yet this situation is a common reality in Quran instruction within Islamic boarding schools.

The novelty of this study lies in its in-depth analysis of the challenges faced by Quran teachers in instructing students with diverse abilities, as well as the strategies they employ to create effective learning experiences. Unlike previous studies that focused on the effectiveness of specific methods, this study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to uncover the teachers' experiences, obstacles, and instructional practices in managing heterogeneous classrooms.

This study is expected to contribute to the development of theories on Quranic education, particularly regarding classroom management for students with diverse abilities. In practical terms, the findings can serve as a reference for Quran teachers in designing learning strategies that are more adaptive, inclusive, and student-centered. For

Islamic boarding schools and Islamic educational institutions, the findings of this study can be used as evaluation material to improve the quality of Quranic learning by strengthening teacher competencies, developing flexible learning methods, and optimizing mentoring programs for students who require more intensive guidance. Furthermore, this study can also serve as a reference for future researchers in developing studies on the challenges and strategies of Quranic instruction in various Islamic educational contexts.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges and strategies faced by Quran teachers in instructing students within the context of Islamic boarding schools. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore phenomena naturally based on the experiences, perspectives, and practices of the research subjects in a real-world context. Meanwhile, the case study design was used to examine in depth the phenomenon of Quran instruction at a specific location, thereby enabling a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Akem et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2026; Moleong, 2021; Saminu et al., 2025; Sugiyono, 2020).

Method and Type

This study is a qualitative study of the case study type. The case study approach was chosen because the research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the various challenges faced by Quran teachers in instructing students with diverse abilities, as well as the strategies used to overcome these challenges. The research was conducted at the Darul Abror Islamic Boarding School in Purwokerto over a period of three months, spanning the initial observation phase, data collection, and the preparation of the research report. In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary instrument, directly involved in all stages of the research process from data collection to the interpretation of research findings (Moleong, 2021). Thus, the use of a qualitative case study approach was deemed appropriate because it allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges and strategies employed by Quran teachers within the context of learning that occurs naturally in the boarding school environment.

Data Sources

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through observation and interviews with Quran teachers who are actively involved in the learning process. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, taking into account their experience and involvement in Quran learning activities. Secondary data, meanwhile, was obtained from various supporting documents, such as Islamic boarding school profiles, teaching materials, activity schedules, institutional archives, and literature relevant to the research topic (Adel et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2025; Sugiyono, 2020). The simultaneous use of primary and secondary data allowed the researcher to obtain more comprehensive information, thereby enabling a more complete and in-depth description of the research phenomenon.

Instruments

The primary instrument in this study is the researcher (human instrument), who plays a role in determining the research focus, collecting data, analyzing data, and interpreting the research results. To support the data collection process, supporting instruments were used, including observation guidelines, semi-structured interview guidelines, and documentation sheets. The observation guide was used to record learning activities, interactions between teachers and students, and the application of learning strategies during the learning process. Meanwhile, the interview guide was developed based on the research focus, which included the challenges faced by teachers, learning strategies, and efforts made to address differences in student abilities.

Before being used in the study, the interview instrument first underwent an expert validation process (expert judgment). The validation was conducted by faculty members with expertise in Islamic education and qualitative research methodology. This process aimed to assess the alignment of the indicators with the study's objectives, the clarity of the question wording, the relevance of the instrument's content, and the instrument's ability to elicit the necessary data. Based on the validation results, the instrument was deemed suitable for use with some refinements to the wording of the questions. Therefore, the use of an instrument validated by experts is expected to improve the quality of the data obtained and ensure the instrument's alignment with the research focus and objectives.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to obtain a direct picture of the implementation of Quran instruction, interactions between teachers and students, and various conditions that arose during learning activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit in-depth information regarding teachers' experiences in facing various instructional challenges and the strategies they employed to overcome them. Documentation was used as supporting data, including photographs of activities, teaching materials, lesson notes, and other documents related to the research focus (Dasrizal et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2024). The integrated use of observation, interviews, and documentation was chosen because it provides complementary data, allowing for a deeper and more objective understanding of the phenomena under study.

Data Analysis Techniques and Tools

Data analysis in this study utilized the interactive analysis model developed by (Miles, 2015). This model was chosen because it allows the analysis process to proceed continuously from the start of data collection until the completion of the study. The analysis was conducted in three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected, focused, grouped, and simplified the data relevant to the research focus. The reduced data were then presented in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate the researcher's identification of patterns, relationships, and trends emerging from the research findings. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and conducting ongoing verification to ensure the consistency and validity of the research findings (Oktavia et al., 2025; Thuwaiba & Salaeh, 2025). The interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña is considered appropriate for this study because it allows the analysis process to be conducted continuously and helps the researcher systematically identify patterns, themes, and meanings emerging from the field data.

Data Validity

Data validity in this study was tested through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from various informants involved in Quran instruction. Meanwhile, methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation so that the information obtained would mutually reinforce one another. In addition, the researcher also conducted member checking with the informants to ensure that the interpretation of the data was consistent with the information they provided during the research process. The application of these various techniques aims to enhance the credibility, reliability, confirmability, and transferability of the research results (Akem et al., 2025; Moleong & Surjaman, 2014; Sugiyono, 2020). By applying triangulation and member checking, the research results are expected to possess a high level of credibility and reliability, ensuring that the findings are academically accountable.

Overall, the research procedures which include selecting a case study design, identifying data sources, using instruments validated by experts, applying various data collection techniques, analyzing data using an interactive model, and testing data validity through triangulation and member checking are designed to produce in-depth, valid, and contextually relevant findings. Therefore, these methodological procedures are considered appropriate for uncovering the challenges and strategies of Quran teachers in instructing students within the context of Indonesian Islamic boarding schools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Challenges Teachers of the Quran in Teaching Students at Islamic Boarding Schools

Research findings indicate that Quran teachers face various challenges in conducting instruction at Islamic boarding schools. These challenges arise as a result of the diversity in students' characteristics, including their ability to read the Quran, memory capacity, learning speed, and motivation to learn. In addition, limited class time also affects the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. These various conditions require teachers to possess adequate pedagogical, managerial, and interpersonal skills so that instruction can take place effectively and accommodate the diverse needs of all students.

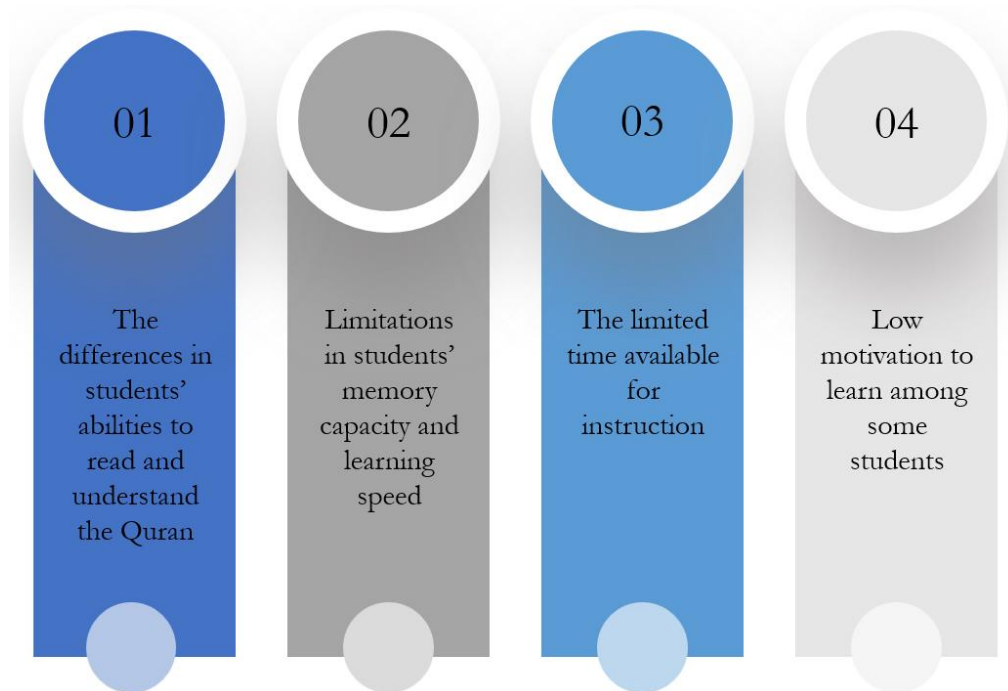


Fig 2. Challenges Teachers of the Quran

First, the differences in students' abilities to read and understand the Quran. One of the main challenges faced by Quran teachers is the variation in students' abilities to read and understand the Quran. Some students are already able to read the Quran fluently and understand the basics of tajwid, while others still struggle to recognize the *hijaiyah* letters, pronounce the *makbarijul huruf* correctly, and apply the rules of recitation accurately. These differences in ability require teachers to adapt their teaching methods so that all students can participate in the learning process optimally.

Based on the results of observations, students with better reading skills tend to grasp the material more quickly. Conversely, students who are still at the basic level require more intensive support through repetition and individual guidance. This situation requires teachers to divide their attention equally among all students. A teacher informant stated:

“Each student’s ability to read and understand the material in the Quran varies. Some grasp and memorize quickly, while others require repeated practice. Therefore, we must adapt our teaching methods to meet their needs.”

Another teacher added:

“Within a single study group, it is common to find students who can already read fluently, while others are still learning to identify the articulation points of letters and basic tajwid. This situation requires teachers to provide differentiated instruction so that all students can develop according to their abilities.”

These findings indicate that the diversity of students’ abilities poses a fundamental challenge in Quran instruction. This situation requires teachers to implement adaptive and flexible teaching methods so that the learning needs of every student can be optimally accommodated.

Second, limitations in students’ memory capacity and learning speed. The next challenge relates to differences in students’ memory capacity and learning speed. In Quran instruction, the ability to recall recitations, tajwid, and memorized passages is a crucial aspect that determines learning success (Hamdani, 2018). However, research findings indicate that not all students possess the same memory capacity.

Some students are able to understand and remember the material after only a few repetitions. Conversely, there are students who need more time to master the same material. This situation requires teachers to review the material periodically so that all students can achieve the expected competencies. A teacher informant explained:

“Differences in memory capacity pose a unique challenge. Some students understand immediately after a single explanation, but others need guidance and repetition several times until they truly understand.”

Another teacher informant stated:

“Some students can memorize and recall the text quickly, while others require more intensive repetition. Therefore, teachers often repeat the material so that all students can follow the lesson effectively.”

Research findings indicate that differences in memory capacity and learning speed pose challenges that affect the effectiveness of Quran instruction. Therefore, teachers need to incorporate material review, ongoing guidance, and instruction tailored to each student’s abilities (Mursyida & Ismet, 2019).

Third, the limited time available for instruction. The limited time available for instruction also poses a significant challenge. Teachers are not only tasked with teaching students to read the Quran but also with guiding them in understanding tajwid, correcting their pronunciation of letters, and evaluating each student’s reading ability.

Observations show that the available instructional time is often insufficient to provide optimal learning support to all students. This situation becomes even more pronounced when there are a large number of students with varying skill levels. A teacher informant stated:

“The available instructional time often feels insufficient because we have to divide our attention among all students. Meanwhile, students who are still struggling require more intensive support.”

Another teacher informant added:

“When there are a large number of students, class time is often insufficient to provide individual guidance to all students. As a result, some material must be continued in the next session.”

These findings indicate that time constraints are one of the main obstacles in teaching the Quran. Therefore, teachers are required to manage their time effectively and set learning priorities that align with the students’ needs.

Fourth, low motivation to learn among some students. In addition to academic factors, motivation to learn is also a challenge that affects the success of Quran instruction. Research findings indicate that students’ levels of motivation vary. Some students show high enthusiasm, while others tend to be passive, lack self-confidence, and easily lose focus during lessons.

This situation affects students' level of participation in learning activities as well as the development of their Quran reading skills. A teacher informant explained:

"Sometimes there are students who lack confidence when asked to read in front of their classmates. There are also those who get bored quickly, so they need to be given motivation and special attention to keep them enthusiastic about learning."

Another teacher informant stated:

"Students' motivation to learn isn't always the same. Some are very enthusiastic about participating in lessons, but others need constant encouragement and attention to stay focused throughout the learning process."

Based on these findings, it is clear that motivation to learn plays a very important role in the success of Quran instruction. Therefore, teachers need to implement various motivational strategies that can enhance students' engagement, self-confidence, and enthusiasm for learning (Damayanti et al., 2024).

Strategies Used by Quran Teachers to Overcome Learning Challenges

In facing these various challenges, Quran teachers implement a variety of teaching strategies tailored to the students' needs and the prevailing learning conditions. The strategies applied are not only oriented toward improving Quran reading skills but are also aimed at creating a conducive learning environment, enhancing learning motivation, and providing equal opportunities for every student to develop according to their individual abilities. Based on the research findings, the strategies implemented by teachers include the use of adaptive learning methods, the formation of study groups and peer tutoring, and the provision of motivation through a personalized approach to students. This paragraph serves as an introduction before discussing each strategy identified in the study.

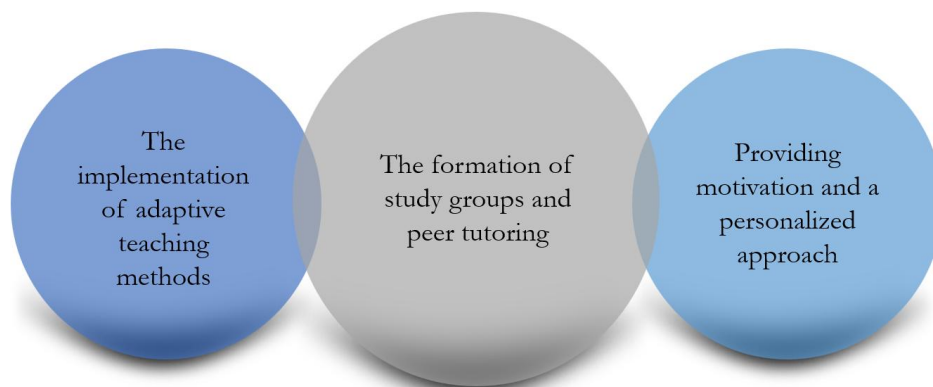


Fig 3. Strategies Used by Quran Teachers

First, the implementation of adaptive teaching methods. To address differences in students' abilities, teachers implement adaptive learning methods tailored to each student's individual ability level. Teachers use the *talaqqi* method, reading drills, step-by-step reading exercises, and independent practice. A teacher informant explained:

"We do not use a single method for all students. Learning methods are adapted to their circumstances and abilities so that the learning process becomes more effective."

Another teacher informant added:

"Students who are still at the basic level usually receive more intensive guidance through talaqqi and reading drills, while students who are already fluent are given independent reading exercises."

These findings indicate that the implementation of adaptive learning methods is a key strategy for accommodating the diversity of students' abilities, thereby making the learning process more effective.

Second, the formation of study groups and peer tutoring. The next strategy is the formation of study groups and the use of peer tutors. Teachers involve more proficient students to help their peers who are still struggling. A teacher informant stated:

"We often form small groups and assign students who are more proficient to help their peers. This method is quite effective because they feel more comfortable learning with their peers."

Another teacher explained:

"Through peer tutors, students who are struggling become more confident in asking questions. In addition to helping their peers, the students who serve as tutors also become more skilled at reading the Quran."

Based on the research findings, peer tutoring is an effective strategy for helping teachers manage heterogeneous classrooms. In addition to improving Quran reading skills, this strategy also fosters cooperation and a sense of responsibility among students.

Third, providing motivation and a personalized approach. The final strategy implemented by teachers is providing motivation through a personalized approach. Teachers strive to build rapport with students, acknowledge their progress, and offer individualized support. A teacher informant stated:

"We try to motivate every student so they aren't afraid to make mistakes. When they show progress, we acknowledge it so they become more confident."

Another teacher informant added:

"A personalized approach is very important because every student has a different personality. When students feel cared for and valued, they are usually more enthusiastic about participating in Quran lessons."

These findings indicate that providing motivation and a personalized approach positively contribute to enhancing students' self-confidence, participation, and enthusiasm for learning. Thus, this strategy is a key factor in supporting the success of Quran learning in the Islamic boarding school setting.

The results of the study show that differences in students' abilities to read and understand the Quran are the main challenges faced by teachers in the learning process at Islamic boarding schools. These findings indicate that the diversity of students' abilities requires teachers to implement differentiated instruction so that each student's learning needs can be adequately accommodated. From an Islamic educational perspective, teachers are not only tasked with delivering content but also with guiding students according to their developmental levels and abilities. This finding aligns with the research by (Engkizar et al., 2025), which emphasizes that the success of Quranic instruction is significantly influenced by teachers' ability to adapt teaching methods to students' proficiency levels. Research by Basir et al., (2024) also found that grouping students based on ability level can enhance the effectiveness of Quran instruction because the learning process becomes more focused and aligned with students' learning needs.

In addition to differences in reading ability, this study found that students' limited memory capacity and learning speed pose significant challenges in Quranic education. This situation indicates that each student has distinct cognitive characteristics, thereby requiring different instructional approaches. According to educational psychology theory, the ability to recall and understand material is influenced by cognitive abilities, motivation, learning experiences, and the intensity of practice undertaken by students. Therefore, teachers need to provide ongoing material review (drills) and continuous guidance to ensure students can achieve the expected competencies. These findings are consistent with the research by Ma'mun, (2018), which shows that success in learning the Quran is greatly influenced by the intensity of reading practice and consistent repetition of the material.

The research findings also indicate that limited instructional time and low learning motivation among some students are factors that affect the effectiveness of Quran instruction. Time constraints make it difficult for teachers to provide individual guidance to all students, particularly in classes with a large number of students and heterogeneous abilities. Meanwhile, low learning motivation results in suboptimal

student participation during the learning process. These findings reinforce [Ridiawati et al., \(2025\)](#) assertion that learning success is influenced by students' readiness, learning conditions, and teachers' ability to manage the classroom. The results of this study are also consistent with the research by [Shaiakhmetov et al., \(2025\)](#), who found that one of the barriers to Quran learning is the limited time available to provide intensive guidance to students who require extra attention.

To address these various challenges, teachers implemented strategies such as using adaptive teaching methods, forming study groups and peer tutoring, and providing motivation through a personalized approach. These strategies demonstrate that teachers strive to implement student-centered learning by taking into account the needs, abilities, and individual characteristics of their students. These findings support the research by [Ismi & Sofyan, \(2025\)](#); [Leu, \(2020\)](#), which explains that peer tutoring and collaborative learning are effective in improving students' ability to read the Quran, their motivation to learn, and their self-confidence. Furthermore, the results of this study also reinforce the view of [Manullang et al., \(2021\)](#) that the success of Quran instruction is determined not only by the methods used but also by the teacher's ability to create a learning environment that is adaptive, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of students.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Quran teachers at Islamic boarding schools face various challenges in the teaching process, particularly those related to differences in students' abilities to read and understand the Quran, limitations in students' memory and learning speed, limited class time, and low motivation to learn among some students. The diverse characteristics of students require teachers to be able to adapt the learning process so that all students have learning opportunities that suit their needs and ability levels. These conditions indicate that success in Quran instruction is determined not only by mastery of the material but also by the teacher's ability to manage a heterogeneous classroom and create a conducive learning environment.

To address these challenges, teachers implemented a number of adaptive learning strategies, including the use of teaching methods tailored to students' abilities, the formation of study groups and peer tutoring, and the provision of motivation through a personalized approach. These strategies have proven to gradually improve students' participation, self-confidence, and ability to read the Quran. This finding is novel because it not only examines the effectiveness of Quran teaching methods as previous studies have done but also provides an in-depth analysis of the various challenges faced by teachers and the adaptive strategies they employ in managing students with diverse characteristics and abilities within the Islamic boarding school setting. The implications of this study contribute to the development of research on Quranic instruction, particularly regarding the management of heterogeneous classrooms and the implementation of student-centered learning. In practical terms, the research findings can serve as a reference for teachers, Islamic boarding school administrators, and Islamic educational institutions in designing more inclusive, flexible, and effective learning strategies to improve the quality of Quranic education and optimize the continuous development of students' abilities.

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DECLARATIONS

Author contribution

Naisya Putri Arifin: data curation, writing-original draft preparation, **Saim Kayadibi:**

analysis, conceptualization, **Oki Dermawan:** methodology, visualization, and editing.

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The data and the grammatical structure in this article have been validated and verified by English language experts and no AI-generated sentences are included in this article.

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