

Implementation of the Ta'lim Qur'an Program in Ensuring Students' Qur'anic Reading Literacy Competence

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of the Ta'lim Qur'an Program (PTQ) in ensuring students' Qur'anic reading literacy competence at Sunan Kudus State Islamic University. The research addresses the challenge of uneven Qur'anic reading proficiency among university students and examines how PTQ functions as an institutional quality assurance mechanism in Islamic higher education. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with program coordinators, tutors (ustaz/ustazah), and students from various faculties, as well as analysis of curriculum and program documents. The findings reveal that PTQ is implemented through a structured, tiered learning system (BTQ, Tartil, Tahfidz, and Tafsir) combined with an andragogical, problem-based approach to Qur'anic instruction. This implementation effectively improves students' basic Qur'anic reading literacy, particularly in tahsin and tartil, while also strengthening their spiritual discipline and learning motivation. However, the program faces challenges related to limited instructional time, inconsistent student attendance, and supervision constraints. Overall, the study demonstrates that PTQ plays a significant role in ensuring minimum standards of Qur'anic reading competence and provides a practical model for strengthening Qur'anic literacy and quality assurance in Islamic higher education institutions.

Keywords: Ta'lim Qur'an Program; Qur'anic Reading Literacy; Quality Assurance; University Students; Islamic Higher Education

Introduction

Qur'anic education at the level of Islamic higher education has become increasingly strategic, as it directly contributes to the development of students' religious competence, intellectual capacity, and character formation, enabling graduates to actively participate in a global society. Recent studies emphasize that strengthening Qur'anic literacy ranging from tartil reading proficiency and mastery of tajwid to the internalization of Qur'anic values constitutes an integral component of curriculum design in Islamic universities and higher education institutions across the Muslim world, aiming to foster holistic student development both spiritually and professionally (Islam & Padli, 2023a).

In this context, Qur'anic education functions not merely as a means of fulfilling ritual obligations but also as a foundational element for cultivating academic ethos, professional ethics, and moral sensitivity, dimensions that are consistently highlighted in studies on the effectiveness of contemporary Islamic higher education curricula (Siregar & Putra, 2024). Islamic educational scholarship further underscores that education must integrate cognitive, spiritual, and moral dimensions to produce graduates who are intellectually competent and ethically grounded. Epistemological perspectives on Islamic education also stress the importance of contextualizing Qur'anic instruction within modern educational frameworks without detaching it from its normative foundations (Gojali et al., 2024).

Mastery of Qur'anic reading with accuracy and tartil is a fundamental competence that every Muslim, particularly students in Islamic higher education institutions (IHEIs), is expected to possess. In this regard, Qur'anic reading proficiency is not solely an expression of Islamic identity but also a basic academic requirement that students must fulfill prior to completing undergraduate studies (Rijal et al., 2020). Sunan Kudus State Islamic University (UIN Sunan Kudus), for instance, mandates that newly admitted students complete Ta'lim Qur'ani and Tahfidzul Qur'an programs as prerequisites for graduation and thesis defense registration, reflecting the institutionalization of Qur'anic literacy as a quality standard in higher education (Kudus, 2021).

The Ta'lim Qur'an program at UIN Sunan Kudus is designed to ensure that students are able to read the Qur'an correctly and fluently (tartil) while understanding fundamental principles of tajwīd. The program curriculum encompasses instruction on makhraj (articulation points), characteristics of letters, and tajwīd rules, followed by intensive practical exercises in reading Qur'anic verses. Implemented over two academic semesters, the program applies both practical and theoretical assessments, and institutional data indicate relatively high participation and completion rates since its implementation in the 2024/2025 academic year (Kudus, 2021).

Nevertheless, empirical evidence consistently reveals that a considerable number of university students remain unable to read the Qur'an accurately in accordance with tajwīd and makhraj standards. This condition is influenced by diverse educational backgrounds, limited Qur'anic instruction during secondary education, and low motivation for independent Qur'anic learning (Islam & Padli, 2023a; Anggara et al., 2023). Consequently, systematic and structured Qur'anic learning programs are required to ensure that minimum literacy standards are achieved by all students in Islamic higher education.

Supporting this concern, a study conducted at Al-Azhar Indonesia University found that a number of students failed the Qur'anic reading test or deliberately postponed taking it near graduation, thereby delaying academic completion and necessitating direct intervention from department heads and academic advisors (Ulum et al., n.d.). Similarly, research at Ma'had Al-Jami'ah

UIN Walisongo revealed that a significant proportion of PGMI students remained at the Iqra' level, although targeted interventions such as Shobahul Qur'an and structured tajwid instruction successfully improved most students' reading competence despite persistent challenges related to participation and facilities (Khikmah, 2024).

In response to these challenges, various innovations in Qur'anic instruction have been implemented, including Ta'lim Qur'an and Tahfidzul Qur'an programs organized through structured learning groups and intensive mentoring systems that are compulsory for first-year students. These programs aim not only to enhance students' Qur'anic reading skills but also to foster religious awareness, discipline, and character formation through habitual engagement with the Qur'an within campus life. Empirical findings confirm that intensified Qur'anic instruction using innovative methods significantly improves students' reading proficiency and motivation to continuously refine their recitation (Luthfiyyah et al., 2025).

The effectiveness of Ta'lim Qur'an programs is strongly influenced by integrated mentoring systems, adaptive curricula, and the competence of certified instructors. Instructional approaches grounded in principles of simplicity, enjoyment, and emotional engagement have been shown to be effective across diverse student backgrounds (Junita et al., 2022). Furthermore, proportional class management, rigorous monitoring through daily assessments and periodic examinations, and adequate learning facilities serve as crucial supporting factors in achieving optimal Qur'anic reading competence ("Program Tahfidz & Tahsin Al-Qur'an," 2025).

Despite these strengths, the implementation of Ta'lim Qur'an programs continues to face internal and external constraints, including disparities in students' initial competence levels, limited instructional time, inconsistent attendance, and non-uniform teaching methods. To address these challenges, institutions have undertaken continuous quality improvement efforts through regular evaluations and the development of interactive and effective instructional modules (Anggara et al., 2023).

Therefore, Ta'lim Qur'an programs play a vital role in ensuring basic Qur'anic reading literacy competence within Islamic higher education institutions (Islam & Padli, 2023a; Siregar & Putra, 2024). The structured implementation of the program at UIN Sunan Kudus demonstrates that a holistic and participatory approach can significantly enhance students' Qur'anic reading quality while simultaneously serving as a foundational strategy for cultivating Qur'an-literate graduates with strong integrity and social responsibility. This study seeks to further analyze the roles, strategies, and challenges of Ta'lim Qur'ani programs within the broader context of Islamic higher education in Indonesia.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research with a case study design to explore in depth the implementation of the Ta'lim Qur'an Program at Sunan Kudus State Islamic University and its role in ensuring students' Qur'anic reading literacy competence. A qualitative approach is appropriate for examining educational phenomena that are complex, contextual, and closely related to participants' experiences and interpretations (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Crowe et al., 2011).

The case study design was selected because it enables an intensive and holistic examination of a contemporary program within its real-life institutional context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its setting are not clearly defined. This design allows researchers to integrate multiple sources of evidence to gain a comprehensive understanding of program implementation processes and outcomes (Crowe et al., 2011; Shrestha & Bhattarai, 2022).

The research was conducted at UIN Sunan Kudus, where the Ta'lim Qur'an Program has been institutionalized as a compulsory program for undergraduate students. Participants were selected using purposeful sampling, which is commonly employed in qualitative research to identify individuals who are directly involved in and knowledgeable about the phenomenon under investigation. The participants included program coordinators, Qur'anic tutors (ustaz and ustazah), and students from various faculties who had participated in the program (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Sitorus, 2021).

Data were collected through multiple qualitative techniques to ensure data triangulation and to capture diverse perspectives related to the program. First, participatory observation was conducted to document teaching and learning interactions, student participation, and instructional practices during Ta'lim Qur'an sessions. Second, semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out with key informants to explore perceptions of program objectives, implementation strategies, challenges, and perceived impacts. Third, document analysis was undertaken to examine curriculum documents, program guidelines, assessment instruments, and institutional reports related to the Ta'lim Qur'an Program (Crowe et al., 2011; Shrestha & Bhattarai, 2022).

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following an iterative process of data reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation. This analytical approach enables researchers to identify recurring patterns and themes that emerge from participants' narratives and observational data, thereby facilitating a contextualized understanding of how the program operates and influences students' Qur'anic reading competence (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Sitorus, 2021).

To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the qualitative findings, several strategies were employed, including data triangulation across observation, interview, and document sources, member checking to verify the

accuracy of interview interpretations, and researcher reflexivity to minimize subjective bias during data interpretation. These strategies are widely recognized as essential for enhancing credibility, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative case study research (Crowe et al., 2011; Shrestha & Bhattarai, 2022).

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary involvement, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using pseudonyms and restricting access to research data, in accordance with ethical standards in qualitative educational research (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Results and Discussion

The Strategic Position of Ta'lim Qur'an in Islamic Higher Education

The findings of this study demonstrate that Islamic higher education in Indonesia functions not only as a space for academic knowledge transmission but also as an institutional arena for cultivating students' spiritual awareness, moral character, and religious identity. Within this broader educational mandate, the Ta'lim Qur'an Program emerges as a strategic response to the need for strengthening Qur'anic literacy and character formation among university students. Empirical data collected through observation and interviews indicate that students perceive the program as more than a routine religious requirement; rather, it is understood as a formative learning process that connects intellectual engagement with spiritual development. This finding supports previous research emphasizing that Qur'anic education within higher education institutions plays a crucial role in shaping campus culture and reinforcing moral values amid the challenges of secularization and globalization (Sari & Astuti, 2025).

The program's contribution is not limited to technical improvement in Qur'anic reading skills but extends to the internalization of core ethical values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and compassion. These values are reflected in students' attitudes toward learning, peer interaction, and participation in campus activities. This aligns with broader Islamic education discourse, which views Qur'anic learning as a means of addressing spiritual disengagement among young adults in the digital era by restoring a value-based orientation grounded in revelation (Yusuf, 2021). In this regard, the Ta'lim Qur'an Program functions as an integrative educational space that supports both cognitive and affective dimensions of student development.

Qur'anic Literacy as an Urgent Educational Challenge

The study reveals that Qur'anic literacy remains a critical issue among incoming university students. Tutors and program coordinators reported that many first-year students demonstrate limited proficiency in basic Qur'anic reading, particularly in terms of makhraj accuracy and adherence to tajwid

rules. This condition is frequently described by institutional stakeholders as a form of “Qur’anic literacy emergency,” reflecting a significant gap between the expected religious competence of students at Islamic universities and their actual abilities. These findings are consistent with national-level studies highlighting persistent deficiencies in Qur’anic literacy among Muslim youth, including those pursuing higher education (Muhammad et al., 2024).

In response to this challenge, the Ta’lim Qur’an Program serves as an institutional mechanism for value internalization and competency assurance. The program addresses three fundamental student needs: structured exposure to the Qur’an within an academic setting, the development of a sense of belonging to Qur’anic norms, and the strengthening of moral resilience in the face of global cultural influences (Yusuf, 2021). Over time, this process contributes to the formation of graduates who possess Qur’anic insight, ethical conduct in intellectual and social interactions, and readiness to assume leadership roles in society, as articulated in Qur’an-based character education frameworks (Hakim, 2014). From an institutional perspective, this approach reflects a broader effort to align curriculum development with contextual religious needs and local educational challenges (Fauzi, 2019).

Core Functions of the Ta’lim Qur’an Program

The findings indicate that the Ta’lim Qur’an Program fulfills three interrelated functions within the university context. First, it serves as a foundation for students’ spiritual and moral development. Through halaqah-based learning activities involving tilawah, tahfidz, tafsir, and reflective discussion, students are encouraged to internalize Qur’anic teachings consciously and meaningfully. Observational data show that these activities foster a Qur’anic atmosphere on campus, integrating spiritual formation into the daily rhythm of academic life and reinforcing the role of the university as a moral community (Nasir & Rijal, 2021).

Second, the program plays a significant role in strengthening Muslim student identity within a globalized academic environment. Interview data suggest that students who actively participate in Qur’anic learning communities exhibit greater confidence in maintaining their religious identity while engaging in diverse academic and social contexts. This finding corroborates earlier research indicating that participation in Qur’anic halaqah is positively associated with academic performance, social awareness, and emotional intelligence, as students develop self-regulation, humility, and patience through sustained engagement with Qur’anic teachings (Wahyuni, 2024).

Third, the Ta’lim Qur’an Program contributes to students’ moral strength and psychological resilience. Tutors reported that regular Qur’anic recitation and reflection help students manage academic stress and emotional challenges, particularly during periods of high academic pressure. This finding supports previous studies demonstrating that Qur’anic practices function as a form of spiritual coping and emotional regulation, positioning the Qur’an as

both a moral guide and a source of psychological well-being in Islamic educational settings (Rofiqi et al., 2023).

Program Implementation at UIN Sunan Kudus

The implementation of the Ta'lim Qur'an Program at UIN Sunan Kudus was initiated in response to empirical observations indicating that many students lacked adequate Qur'anic reading skills, as revealed during community service activities and institutional Qur'anic reading assessments. Institutional deliberations among university leaders and stakeholders led to the establishment of a compulsory Ta'lim Qur'an Program for first- and second-semester students, coordinated by Ma'had Al Jami'ah as the implementing body. This policy reflects an institutional commitment to embedding Qur'anic literacy as a core component of academic quality assurance (Fauzi, 2019).

The program is conducted twice weekly in the early morning, with scheduling designed to minimize disruption to formal academic activities. Tutors are selected through a rigorous process emphasizing Qur'anic competence and pesantren educational backgrounds. A distinctive feature of the program is the initial classification of students based on their Qur'anic reading proficiency, resulting in four instructional levels: BTQ, Tartil, Tahfidz, and Tafsir. This tiered instructional model enables differentiated learning and accommodates diverse student abilities, supporting previous findings that structured and leveled Qur'anic instruction enhances learning effectiveness (Islam & Padli, 2023b).

At the BTQ level, instruction focuses on foundational reading skills and commonly recited surahs to ensure functional Qur'anic literacy for social and religious participation. The Tartil level emphasizes fluency and tajwid accuracy, while the Tahfidz and Tafsir levels provide advanced students with opportunities to strengthen memorization and deepen interpretive understanding. This progression reflects a comprehensive approach to Qur'anic literacy development that integrates technical skill acquisition with deeper engagement with Qur'anic meaning.

Andragogical and Problem-Based Instructional Approach

The findings show that the Ta'lim Qur'an Program employs an andragogical instructional approach oriented toward problem solving, which is well suited to adult learners in higher education. Tutors reported that learning activities emphasize identifying specific reading errors, analyzing their causes, and applying corrective principles independently. This approach reduces reliance on repetitive lecturing and encourages active learner participation, aligning with principles of adult education and self-directed learning (Nurchalis Sofyan & Hendra S. H., 2018).

From a theoretical perspective, this instructional model integrates behaviorist and cognitive learning principles. Repetitive practice and immediate feedback function as behavioral reinforcement mechanisms, while

error analysis and self-correction promote active cognitive processing. Similar instructional approaches have been shown to improve Qur'anic literacy outcomes in other Islamic higher education contexts, particularly when combined with structured assessment and continuous feedback (Yunita et al., 2025; Islam & Padli, 2023b).

Challenges and Institutional Responses

Despite its positive impact, the Ta'lim Qur'an Program faces several implementation challenges. These include limited instructional time, inconsistent student attendance due to early morning schedules, low intrinsic motivation among students from non-religious educational backgrounds, and reduced supervision in later semesters. These challenges are consistent with findings from previous studies highlighting structural and motivational barriers in compulsory Qur'anic programs within higher education (Anggara et al., 2023).

To address these challenges, university leaders and Ma'had administrators conduct regular evaluations and consultative meetings with tutors to refine instructional strategies. Continuous quality improvement efforts include strengthening monitoring mechanisms, enhancing tutor coordination, and developing more engaging instructional modules aimed at increasing student motivation and participation. These institutional responses reflect an adaptive approach to curriculum implementation that balances normative religious goals with practical educational constraints (Fauzi, 2019).

From an integrative theoretical perspective, the Ta'lim Qur'an Program can be understood through behaviorist, cognitive, and humanistic Islamic education frameworks. Behaviorist elements are evident in talaqqi, musyafahah, repetitive drills, and immediate correction, which function as institutional reinforcement mechanisms, particularly when program completion is linked to academic requirements (Yunita et al., 2025). Cognitive dimensions emerge through the tiered instructional design and problem-based andragogical approach, which promote conceptual understanding of tajwid rules and Qur'anic structures (Islam & Padli, 2023b).

Beyond these dimensions, the program also reflects a humanistic Islamic education paradigm that emphasizes holistic student development. Through sustained engagement with the Qur'an, students cultivate discipline, responsibility, honesty, and social empathy, supporting the view that Qur'anic education embedded in institutional culture fosters religious humanism and resilience in the face of modern academic pressures (Amirullah et al., 2022). This integrative approach underscores the potential of Ta'lim Qur'an programs to function not merely as remedial literacy initiatives but as comprehensive educational models that align spiritual formation with academic development within Islamic higher education institutions.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Ta'lim Qur'an Program at Sunan Kudus State Islamic University plays a substantive and strategic role in ensuring students' Qur'anic reading literacy competence within Islamic higher education. Empirical findings demonstrate that the program functions not merely as a formal graduation requirement, but as an institutional mechanism for quality assurance in Qur'anic literacy that integrates academic objectives with spiritual and character development.

The implementation of the program is characterized by a structured and tiered instructional model consisting of BTQ, Tartil, Tahfidz, and Tafsir levels, which effectively accommodates students' diverse initial competencies. This tiered structure, combined with an andragogical and problem-based learning approach, enables students to actively identify and correct reading errors, thereby strengthening their tahsin skills and conceptual understanding of tajwid. The findings confirm that differentiated instruction and adult-oriented pedagogy are critical for improving Qur'anic literacy outcomes at the university level.

Furthermore, the study reveals that the Ta'lim Qur'an Program contributes to broader educational outcomes beyond technical reading proficiency. Participation in the program fosters students' spiritual discipline, moral awareness, and Islamic identity, while also enhancing their psychological resilience in coping with academic pressures and social challenges. These outcomes indicate that Qur'anic literacy programs, when systematically integrated into institutional policy, can function as effective instruments for holistic student development in Islamic higher education.

Despite these positive impacts, the study also identifies several implementation challenges, including limited instructional time, inconsistent student attendance, varying levels of learning motivation among students from non-religious educational backgrounds, and reduced supervision in later stages of the program. These constraints suggest the need for continuous institutional evaluation, strengthened monitoring mechanisms, and pedagogical innovation to sustain program effectiveness.

Overall, this study contributes to the discourse on Qur'anic education in higher education by providing empirical evidence of how a structured Ta'lim Qur'an Program can address Qur'anic literacy gaps and support character formation within an Islamic university context. The findings offer practical implications for policy development, curriculum design, and program management in Islamic higher education institutions. Future research is recommended to examine the long-term impact of such programs on students' academic performance, religious practice, and professional ethics across different institutional settings.

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