



PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES OF LEARNING THE QUR'AN IN SCHOOLS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND ISLAMIC-BASED SCHOOLS

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Abstract: This study aimed to explore the fundamental problems encountered by teachers in teaching the Qur'an and to analyze these problematics through an integrative theoretical perspective. Employing a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with ten Islamic Religious Education teachers from elementary, junior high, and senior high schools in Bandung, Indonesia. The findings reveal several persisted problematics, including limited instructional time, students' low initial ability to read the Qur'an, minimal parental involvement, heterogeneous student backgrounds, as well as weak student motivation and self-confidence. These problematics indicated that Qur'anic learning is influenced not only by classroom pedagogy but also by broader environmental, social, and psychological factors. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, this study demonstrated that difficulties in Qur'anic learning emerge from complex interactions among family environments, social modeling processes, and students' basic psychological needs. The implications of this study emphasized the need for holistic and ecosystem-based instructional strategies that strengthen home-school collaboration, provide observable role models, and support students' motivation and self-confidence in learning the Qur'an. These findings offered valuable insights for teachers, school leaders, and policymakers in improving the quality of Qur'anic instruction in formal education.

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INTRODUCTION

For Muslims, the Qur'an plays a crucial role in character formation and the spiritual development of students, serving as the primary foundation for character education (Supriyadi & Julia, 2022; Yusof et al., 2021). The Indonesian government has established the Qur'an and Hadith as main elements that must be studied by students in Islamic Religious Education and Character Education,

emphasizing textual and contextual understanding actualized as life values, starting from *hijaiyah* letter introduction in elementary school to understanding Qur'anic verses and hadith on important daily life topics in secondary school (Abidin & Marfuah, 2021; Rokhim & Rusydiyah, 2021). However, efforts to help students understand the Qur'an from elementary to secondary education faced significant problematics, with many students at the tertiary level still unable to read the Qur'an correctly and fluently, indicating systemic failure in Qur'an literacy learning at all Indonesian education levels (Hakim et al., 2022; Nor et al., 2022).

Several studies demonstrate persistently low Qur'an reading ability across educational levels. At the elementary level, average Qur'an reading ability falls into the low category (Syarif, 2021; Latipah, 2022). At the higher education level, a survey conducted at a university in Bandung found that only 29% of 2,729 students were able to read the Qur'an in accordance with tajwid rules (Shukri et al., 2020; Dimiyati (2022)). These findings indicate persistent problems from elementary through secondary school that remain unresolved (Pamungkas & Wahab, 2023). In Indonesia's educational context, Qur'an learning forms an inseparable part of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), positioning IRE teachers as frontline implementers who bear partial responsibility for students' persistently low Qur'an reading abilities, though teachers may be fulfilling their obligations earnestly while confronting numerous implementation problematics (Supriadi, 2022; Surasman, 2023).

The students' low Qur'anic reading ability is not merely the result of insufficient teacher competence, but rather stems from complex structural and pedagogical barriers within the system of Qur'anic instruction in schools. Preliminary findings from this study indicated that teachers encounter complex, interrelated problematics that extend beyond classroom instruction, including weak home school collaboration, institutional constraints, and students' psychological barriers, which have not been adequately captured in prior research. Understanding teachers' phenomenological experiences was therefore crucial, as teachers possess insider knowledge of systemic barriers that cannot be revealed through quantitative achievement studies alone. Such insights enabled the identification of connections among issues that appeared fragmented in the literature and highlight context-sensitive strategies emerging from successful practices within constrained educational settings.

Research on Qur'anic learning has been conducted extensively, with most studies focusing on methods to improve students' Qur'anic reading abilities (Aljamea-tus-saifiyah et al., 2023). Internationally, Islamic education scholarship has explored various dimensions. Hussain and Ashraf (2023) examined parental involvement in Islamic education through a systematic review, highlighting families' often-overlooked role. Önder (2023) analyzed the ideal age for learning the Qur'an within a historical-experiential context. In the Indonesian context, recent studies have emphasized teaching strategies and instructional methods. Aliwy & Alhusseini (2022) demonstrated that improving Qur'anic reading skills requires creative learning media, consistent reading practice, regular evaluation,

implementation of tahsin methods, and individualized guidance. Numerous researchers have also evaluated effectiveness of specific methods such as *tilawati* (Hidayati & Rindaningsih, 2024), *iqra*, *qiroati*, and *ummi* (Subki, 2025; Alfayez, 2022; Naqiyah, 2022).

This study adopted Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory as the overarching framework, complemented by Self Determination Theory and Social Learning Theory to explain learning processes and motivational dynamics within an ecological context. Bronfenbrenner's theory provided a macro-level lens for understanding how multilayered environmental systems including the microsystem (family), mesosystem (home-school relationships), exosystem (educational policies), and macrosystem (cultural values) shape students' developmental outcomes (Iruka et al., 2020). From a motivational perspective, Self-Determination Theory by Deci & Ryan (in Nik Abdullah et al., 2021) explained learners' engagement by emphasizing the fulfillment of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ntoumanis & Moller, 2023). Meanwhile, Social Learning Theory, further elaborated through Social Cognitive Theory (Culver et al., 2024; Smith, 2021), highlights that learning occurred through observation, imitation, and modeling within social contexts, underscoring the importance of role models in supporting learning and value internalization (Goyen & Chepyator-Thomson, 2024).

However, despite the breadth of existing literature, a significant theoretical and empirical gap remains. Previous studies tended to examine teaching methods in isolation, without sufficiently accounting for broader ecological systems such as family environments, institutional structures, and cultural contexts that shape the development or stagnation of Qur'anic literacy. Moreover, much existing research adopted student or method-centered perspectives, thereby overlooking teachers' lived experiences in navigating problematics across multiple systemic levels. No comparative study had systematically examined differences between Islamic-based and general schools in Qur'anic literacy outcomes or explored the mechanisms producing these differences, despite indications from this study that school context plays a significant role in shaping instructional conditions. By identifying these problematics from the perspectives of teachers as practitioners, this study is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of instructional design for Qur'anic learning and, practically, to generate more contextual and responsive solutions. This research was considered important for two main reasons. First, it enables the identification of the root causes of Qur'anic learning problematics from the perspectives of the primary actors, namely Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers. Second, it facilitates the mapping of problem based solutions to address students' low Qur'anic reading ability.

This research addressed three central questions. First, what were the main problematics faced by Islamic Education teachers in teaching the Qur'an across different school levels (elementary, junior high, senior high)? Second, how do these problematics differ between Islamic-based and general schools, and what factors explain disparities in student outcomes? Third, which instructional

strategies have proven effective in improving Qur'anic literacy, and under what conditions can they be successfully implemented? The purpose of this study was to provide evidence-based understanding of multi-level problematics in Qur'anic literacy instruction and to identify effective strategies emerging from successful practices, thereby informing policy and pedagogical reformed to enhance religious literacy of Indonesian Muslim youth.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method to explore the lived experiences of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in teaching the Quran in schools. Phenomenology was chosen to understand the nature and meaning of phenomena through in depth examination from individual perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Starks & Trinidad, 2022). The unit of analysis consisted of ten Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers actively teaching in elementary, middle, and high schools in Bandung City, West Java, Indonesia. Interviewees were recruited through criteria-based purposive sampling. The required inclusion criteria were: (1) active Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers at the elementary to high school levels, (2) a minimum of five years of teaching experience, and (3) involvement in a school-based Quran teaching program. Of the 32 teachers surveyed, ten were selected using a maximum variance sampling method that ensured diversity across school levels (four elementary, three middle, three high schools), school types (six Islamic-based, four public), and teaching experience (5-27 years). Data saturation was reached after the tenth interview, which was confirmed when no new themes emerged in the last two interviews.

In-depth interviews were chosen to obtain detailed information focused on students' perspectives, experiences, feelings, and the meanings they construct regarding a specific topic or issue. The interview protocol covered five domains: (1) teaching background and context, (2) problematics to student competency and motivation, (3) institutional constraints and resources, (4) parental involvement, and (5) effective teaching strategies. All interviews were audio-recorded with written consent, transcribed verbatim, and member-checked with participants for accuracy. The collected data were then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's analytical techniques. Three stages of Miles and Huberman's data analysis: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or data verification (Asipi et al., 2022). Data reduction simplified data by summarizing, selecting, focusing, and discarding unimportant data. Next, the data presentation stage involves compiling information through narratives, graphs, or images from the data obtained. The conclusion-drawing or data verification stage involves researchers ensuring that each stage of analysis and conclusions aligns with the research problem formulation. Finally, data triangulation techniques are used to test data validity. There are at least four steps in testing data validity: triangulation of researchers, methods, theories, and research data sources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Problematics in Teaching the Qur'an

The participants consisted of ten Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers from different school levels, including elementary, junior high, and senior high schools in Bandung. The table provides contextual information regarding participants' gender, teaching experience, school level, type of school, and employment status to illustrate the diversity of professional backgrounds represented in the study.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Participants

Code	Gender	Teaching Period	School Level	Type of School	Teacher Status
P1	M	15 years	Elementary School	Islamic based School	Other
P2	M	7 years	Junior High School	Public School	Civil Servant
P3	F	27 years	Senior High School	Public School	Civil Servant
P4	F	6 years	Senior High School	Public School	Contract Teacher
P5	M	5 years	Elementary School	Islamic based School	Contract Teacher
P6	M	13 years	Elementary School	Public School	Civil Servant
P7	M	18 years	Senior High School	Islamic based School	Other
P8	M	23 years	Junior High School	Public School	Civil Servant
P9	M	13 years	Junior High School	Islamic based School	Other
P10	M	38 years	Elementary School	Public School	Civil Servant

Ten participants who met the research criteria from 32 Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers who completed the identification questionnaire. The participants were drawn from ten schools in the city of Bandung, consisting of four elementary schools, three junior high schools, and three senior high schools. Each educational level was represented by both public schools and Islamic-based schools. The findings related to the problematics faced by IRE teachers in teaching the Qur'an in schools are presented below

Table 2. Distribution of Identified Problematics

No	Problematics Found	Participants	Number of Participants (n=10)
1	Limitations of Students' Competence in Reading the Qur'an	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P8, P9, P10	8
2	Minimal Parental Involvement	P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10	8
3	Insufficient Motivation and Spiritual Awareness	P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9	6
4	Limited Time Allocation	P2, P3, P8, P10	4
5	Psychological Barriers: Feelings of Shame and Inferiority	P3, P4	2
6	Inadequate Teacher Resources	P3, P5	2
7	Classroom Management Problematics	P5, P7	2

Based on the thematic analysis of interviews above, seven major problematics in teaching the Qur'an in schools were identified. The findings

indicated that the problematics experienced by teachers are diverse, encompassing issues related to students, family environments, and institutional factors. The explanation of that problematics were showing below.

Limitations of Students' Competence in Reading the Qur'an

The most dominant finding of this study was students' low initial Quranic reading competency. Eight out of ten participants (80%) stated that the majority of students entered their education with inadequate Quranic reading skills. This problem was consistently found at all levels of education, from elementary school to high school. At the high school level, this condition was very worrying. P4, revealed that each class that was very fluent in reading the Quran is only around 5-10%. A similar statement was made by P8 who stated that the average ability per class was less than 10 people who can read the Quran fluently. This condition shows that after undergoing formal education for 9-12 years, most students still have not mastered the basic skills of reading the Quran. An interesting finding emerged from the experience of P9 who discovered a unique phenomenon that there were students who have good memorization, but when reading they stutter. It turns out they are reading from Latin. This low competency problem is rooted in minimal interaction with the Qur'an before entering formal school, as conveyed by P2 that confirmed that learning the Qur'an cannot start from zero in formal schools, but requires a foundation from family and environmental education.

Minimal Parental Involvement

The most significant and consistent finding in this study was the minimal role of parents in supporting their children's Quranic learning. Eight out of ten participants (80%) identified this factor as the main root cause, making it the most frequently cited problem in the study. P1 described the concrete impact of the minimal role of parents: "the challenge was when there were holidays, parents don't repeat at home, so it's back to zero." A similar condition was expressed by P7 who stated: "at home: parents don't study the Koran. They don't pay enough attention. Parents leave it entirely to the school." P3 revealed a correlation between parental concern and children's abilities: "children who can't do it yet, their parents don't care enough." Furthermore, P3 explained that "many parents are busy." P5 reinforced this finding by stating that "if it's slow, it's the parents who are busy," showing a direct correlation between the level of parental busyness and the child's learning progress.

This issue was not only related to the quantity of time, but also the quality of support. P9 revealed: "cooperation with parents. At school it's safe, but at home [there's no support]." P4 provided an important cultural perspective: when children "are reluctant to go to the mosque because they don't have friends and come home late at Maghrib... their parents agree when their children don't go to the mosque." This finding suggests that some parents lack firmness in ensuring that their children fulfill their

religious obligations, reflecting a weak religious awareness within the family.

Insufficient Motivation and Spiritual Awareness

Six out of ten participants (60%) identified low motivation to learn as a significant obstacle in learning the Quran. The informants revealed the root of this motivational problem deeply that they didn't yet realize that God's commands were our needs. Cause it was constraints. This statement indicated a crisis of theological understanding among students, where the view religious obligations as a burden rather than a spiritual need. This condition was exacerbated by a lack of support from their environment, as stated by P2 that students motivation has also decreased, because there was almost no role from parents and the surrounding environment so that students had no enthusiasm to be able to read the Quran."

Limited Time Allocation

Four out of ten participants (40%) identified time constraints as a structural barrier to Quranic learning. This problem is particularly experienced by teachers in public schools that do not have a dedicated program for BTQ learning. P2 explained, "There is no dedicated Quranic study schedule. It's only available when covering the Qur'anic elements in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subjects." This situation indicated that Quranic learning was only integrated into regular Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subjects without adequate dedicated time allocated for reading skills. P3 shared a similar experience: "I was given a dedicated lesson, but it didn't have a significant impact. It needs to be personalized, intense, and frequent. There's also not enough time." P8 asserted: "The Quran is considered the most difficult material because it relates to students' competency in reading the Quran. Moreover, in the independent curriculum, 1 in 3 JP (teaching hours) must be filled with projects." This statement shows that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum actually reduces effective time for BTQ learning, because the time allocation must be divided with projects strengthening Pancasila student profiles.

Psychological Barriers: Feelings of Shame and Inferiority

Two participants from junior high and high school (P3 and P4) identified psychological barriers as a factor that complicates special care for students who are not yet fluent in reading the Quran. This barrier was specific to the secondary and senior high school levels. P3 explained the pedagogical dilemma faced most children who cannot yet recited the Quran feel embarrassed in front of their friends. When they wanted to be treated specially, their mother's main consideration was their psychological state. Their parents worried that they will felt uncomfortable and stressed in learning reading and writing the Quran. P4 added the social dimension of this problem when they graduated from

elementary school, children became reluctant to go to the mosque because they had no friends and came home late at Maghrib, so their ability to read the Quran declines. Likewise, their parents agree when their children don't go to the mosque. The above statement revealed the sensitivity of adolescent psychosocial development that needed to be considered and occurs in schools and the community environment.

Inadequate Teacher Resources

Two participants identified limitations in the quantity and quality of teachers as obstacles to Quranic learning. P3 explicitly stated that the number of teachers was limited and they are busy with other things. P5 also revealed that the teaching staff (whose graduates were of varying quality). Some teachers also had incorrect basic principles. These findings indicated that not all teachers had adequate competence in teaching the Quran, especially regarding *tajwid* and *makharijul huruf*. This becomes problematic when schools involved non-IRE teachers in the BTQ habituation program.

Classroom Management Problematics

P5 and P7 identified "children's unruliness" and a lack of discipline as obstacles to implementing the Quranic learning program. P7 explained that students lacked discipline. Every morning they were required to bring a Quran (but not all students complied it). This discipline issue indicated that although the school had a habituation program, its implementation was not always optimal due to a lack of student awareness and compliance.

Differences in Achievement: Islamic-Based Schools vs. Public Schools

One of the main findings of this research was the significant difference in Koran learning outcomes between Islamic schools and state schools. These findings provided insight into the factors that contribute to the success of Al-Quran learning. Table 3 will explain these differences.

Table 3. Differences in Al-Quran Learning in Public and Islamic-based Schools

Aspect	Islamic Based Schools	Public Schools
Qur'anic Learning Outcomes	Majority of students demonstrate fluency in reading the Qur'an, with reported achievement ranging from 60% to 90%	Only a small proportion of students demonstrate fluency, generally ranging from 5% to 10% per class
Structured Program	Special, structured, and scheduled BTQ programs are consistently implemented	BTQ programs are limited or not systematically implemented
Ability-Based Grouping	Students are grouped based on Qur'anic reading ability (leveling system)	Students are generally taught in heterogeneous classes without leveling
Daily Tadarus/Tahsin Practices	Daily tadarus or tahsin activities are routinely conducted	Daily Qur'anic practices are irregular or absent
School Policy	Strong institutional policies support Qur'anic learning targets	Limited policy emphasis on Qur'anic competence

Institutional Expectations Representative Interview Quotes	High expectations for students' Qur'anic reading competence "By sixth grade, 90% of the children were already fluent in reading the Qur'an" (P5); "More are fluent, above 60%" (P7)	Minimal formal expectations regarding Qur'anic literacy outcomes "Only around 5-10% of each class are fluent in reading the Qur'an" (P4); "On average, less than 10 students per class are fluent" (P8)
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Learning to read and write the Quran in Islamic schools and in regular (state) schools shows striking differences in various aspects. In Islamic boarding schools, the Quran learning process was more structured and in-depth, with a focus on mastering correct recitation (*tajwid*), memorization (*hifz*), and understanding the meaning through interpretation (*tafsir*). Learning activities in Islamic boarding schools typically last throughout the day, integrated into the students' daily routine, which included congregational prayer, *dhikr* (remembrance of God), and religious study. This created an environment that supports continuous learning, with greater attention to the depth of religious understanding.

On the other hand, in state schools, Quranic reading and writing lessons tended to be more limited, held only during specific times and often separated from other religious activities. The primary focus in schools was on teaching correct Quranic recitation, but the material taught is limited to basic aspects such as reading and writing Arabic letters, without much connection to discussions of interpretation or in-depth religious knowledge. In addition, teaching in public schools was more based on the national curriculum and was scheduled in a few hours of lessons per week, which made it less intensive than learning in Islamic boarding schools which focus more on spiritual and academic aspects simultaneously.

Best Practices: Effective Learning Strategies

Despite facing various problems, participants in this study also shared various learning strategies that have proven effective in improving students' Qur'an reading competence.

Leveling System and Ability Grouping

Six out of ten participants (60%) implemented a leveling system as the primary strategy to address the heterogeneity of student abilities. P1 and P2 explained that from the moment becoming newby, prospective students were classified into those with intermediate, lower, and upper Iqro. There were two teachers in each class, and there was a special program [ismubaristik]. P8 explained that the systematic stages in grouping divide the criteria: fluent, fluent, stuttering, and unable to read. Collaborate with parents to have children learn special Koran reading. Peer tutors, maximize children who are already fluent by dividing them into groups. This comprehensive approach combined ability classification with collaborative learning strategies.

Daily Habituation Program

A daily habituation program as a key strategy. The informants stated that it was held at 7:30 a.m. and noon. It was a habit of praying *Duha* and *Dhuhr*. The memorization was also done at school, so we just repeat it at home. This program integrated Quranic learning into daily school activities, not just during formal lessons. P6 from a supportive public school also implemented a habituation program. Every day, there was a habituation by the homeroom teacher in the first period. It was mandatory to recite at least one page of the Quran. These findings demonstrated that habituation programs can be implemented in public schools with strong school policy support.

Peer Teaching Method

This peer tutoring strategy to optimize learning with limited teacher availability was implemented. P6 explained that this program was used a peer tutoring system. Those who were fluent learn with their father first, then shared their knowledge with their friends. This implemented a similar approach with more systematic preparation. This was used peer tutoring to maximize fluent children by dividing them into groups. Taught them how to teach, including connecting and separating the *hijaiyah* letters, and then punctuation. There were five stages. The teachers monitor which groups were progressing. However, this strategy was not always effective in all contexts. This program have tried using peer tutors. But the circumstances in each class were different. Some classes were unreliable. Some students were fluent but lack the power [of teaching. This finding indicated that the success of peer tutoring was highly dependent on the characteristics of the class and the leadership abilities of the students who tutor.

Special Class Program/*Takhossus*

Two participants from Islamic schools implemented a special class program for intensive care for students with low abilities. P9 described a highly effective implementation: "Provided an *Iqra* class and a transition class for three hours a week. (90% success). It's held on Mondays and Thursdays. Those who are fluent remain separated." P5 implemented a tiered system: "The religious team oversees memorization, Quran recitation completion, morning prayer, hadith recitation, and religious sermons. There is a special class program. Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4." This program encompasses not only basic BTQ learning but also advanced stages up to memorization. This special class strategy has proven highly effective because it provided intensive learning time with a smaller teacher-to-student ratio, allowing for truly personalized learning.

Evaluation and Accountability System

Several participants implemented a rigorous evaluation system to ensure learning outcomes. P1 explained: "We ask for achievement data per student, then evaluate it directly. It's included in the assessment standards. The report card includes a grade-by-grade assessment. There's

also a syllabus for each student." P5 implemented a stricter system: "There are graduation exams and graduation requirements, including prayer practice, ablution, and Quran recitation. If they don't pass, they're given a note and don't meet the graduation requirements. They repeat the exam until they pass." This system provides clear consequences for students who don't achieve the targeted competencies, thereby increasing student commitment and commitment. P9 implemented a similar policy: "The requirements for moving up to a new grade are: if they haven't achieved the required competencies, their promotion can be postponed." While controversial, this policy demonstrated the school's commitment to prioritizing Quranic competency.

Discussion

Based on data with Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers across various educational levels, this study found that Qur'anic instruction in schools continues to face several fundamental problematics. Thus, the problematics of Qur'anic instruction identified in this study did not represent isolated phenomena, but rather emerged from complex interactions among environmental systems, social learning mechanisms, and students' internal motivational dynamics. Engkizar et al. (2025) broadened the understanding of these problematics by identifying that the problems of Qur'an learning also included the absence of legislation governing the profession of Qur'an teaching, limited availability of qualified teachers, low competency in instructional management, not all Qur'an teachers having a bachelor's degree in Qur'an education, inadequate professional development due to lack of ongoing training, and inadequate teacher compensation. Similar findings in elementary schools Malaysia by Aprilianata et al. (2025) also confirmed that there are varying levels of students' Qur'an learning, administrative burdens that hinder teachers' focus on planning effective Qur'an teaching activities, and busy schedules that limit teachers' opportunities to participate in further training. These findings indicated that Qur'anic learning in schools was not merely related to pedagogical practices within the classroom, but was also shaped by interconnected environmental, psychological, and social factors.

Upon closer examination, these problematics can be understood through an educational ecology perspective. From the standpoint of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, students' low Qur'anic reading ability cannot be separated from insufficient support at the microsystem level, particularly within the family environment. The lack of regular Qur'anic reading practices at home suggests that the internalization of religious values and skills does not occur consistently. Furthermore, the weak relationship between home and school reflects the suboptimal functioning of the mesosystem, resulting in school-based Qur'anic learning that was insufficiently reinforced by external environments. From this perspective, success in Qur'anic instruction required a holistic approach that addresses all systemic dimensions influencing students' development.

The finding of significant differences in Quranic reading and writing (BTQ) learning between Islamic schools and public schools is in line with previous research. Several studies have shown that Islamic educational institutions had a more in-depth and sustainable approach to teaching the Quran, with an emphasis on tajwid, memorization, and understanding of interpretation (Sailin et al., 2024). For example, research conducted by Hasanah et al. (2023) found that in Islamic boarding schools, Quranic learning takes place intensively over a longer period of time and involves comprehensive teaching activities. In contrast, in public schools, Quranic learning is more limited to basic aspects such as reading and writing, with a relatively shorter time and more structured according to the national curriculum. Research by Junaedi & Suhartini (2022); & Salamuddin et al. (2024) also supports this finding, stating that public schools prioritized Quranic teaching in the context of building students' religious character, without delving as deeply into the academic aspects of religion as in Islamic boarding schools. Thus, the findings regarding the differences in BTQ learning were also strengthened by various studies that show an imbalance between the depth of Qur'an learning in Islamic boarding schools and state schools.

The differences in Quranic reading and writing (BTQ) instruction between Islamic schools and public schools can be explained by the different curriculum approaches and learning times. In Islamic boarding schools, longer learning times and more intensive in-depth material provide students with the opportunity to master Quranic reading and understanding more comprehensively. In contrast, in public schools, BTQ instruction is limited to shorter lesson times and focuses more on the technical aspects of reading and writing. This prevents instruction in public schools from addressing the aspects of interpretation and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in depth. Therefore, this imbalance in duration and depth of material is a major factor influencing the differences in Quranic reading and writing competency between students in Islamic boarding schools and public schools.

The findings also revealed that students tended to experience difficulties when they lack observable role models. This aligned with Bandura's Social Learning Theory (in Rayes & Albelaihi, 2023), which emphasized that learning occurs effectively through observation and modeling. Instructional practices such as peer tutoring, identified in several schools, demonstrate that the presence of peer models can facilitate learning through imitation and social reinforcement. These findings were consistent with the study by Al Arifi et al. (2025) which identified four categories of problematics faced by students in memorizing the Qur'an: (1) student-related factors (cognitive limitations, psychological fatigue, and motivational issues), (2) teacher-related factors (limited pedagogical skills and lack of standardization), (3) curriculum and time management constraints (balancing memorization with general education), and (4) institutional barriers (limited resources, weak supervision, and policy gaps). Basir et al. (2024) stated that student engagement can be enhanced through the integration of digital and visual learning tools to support the understanding of

tajwid rules. Recent studies further suggest that collaborative learning models, technology integration, role-model-based instruction, and strong institutional support are more effective in improving students' Qur'anic reading skill (Ab Alim et al., 2025; Herlina et al., 2021; Karman et al., 2024).

Despite facing various problematics in the process of learning to read and write the Quran (BTQ), such as lack of time, limited facilities, and varying levels of student ability, effective learning strategies are still being implemented well. Some of the strategies implemented included the use of individual approaches, where teachers paid special attention to students who need more intensive guidance, as well as the application of technology-based learning techniques, such as mobile applications that help students memorize and learn the Quran reading correctly. In addition, in several schools, the use of a group-based approach has also proven effective, with more advanced students helping their friends who were struggling, creating a mutually supportive learning atmosphere. Although obstacles remain, efforts to improve the quality of Quranic reading and writing learning continue, along with the implementation of innovative methods that support successful learning, even though problematics in the education system remain.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributed by proposing an integrative analytical framework that combines Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, Bandura's social learning theory, and Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory within the context of Qur'anic instruction in formal schooling. The integration of these three theories enriched the understanding of how Qur'anic learning problematics arise at the systemic level, how learning processes unfold through social interaction, and why students demonstrate varying levels of motivation. Empirically, this study reinforced the view that problematics in Qur'anic instruction cannot be addressed solely through improvements in classroom teaching methods, but instead require an ecosystemic approach involving families, schools, and students' broader social environments. Moreover, the instructional strategies identified in this study provide a conceptual foundation for developing Qur'anic learning approaches that are more humanistic, contextual, and oriented toward fulfilling students' psychological needs. The diversity of participants involved in this study yields rich findings that were applicable across different educational levels and school types.

CONCLUSION

This study offered a comprehensive assessment of the problematics faced by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in teaching the Qur'an in formal school settings, revealing that Qur'anic learning difficulties were not solely pedagogical in nature but emerge from the complex interaction of systemic, social, and psychological factors. The most important finding of this research was that effective Qur'anic instruction requires a holistic and ecosystem-based approach, as limited instructional time, low initial reading competence, weak parental involvement, heterogeneous student backgrounds, and insufficient

student motivation and self-confidence collectively shape learning outcomes. This study highlights the need for instructional strategies that strengthen home-school collaboration, provide observable role models, and support students' basic psychological needs to promote meaningful Qur'anic learning experiences. The implication of this study lied in its in-depth qualitative insights derived from teachers across multiple educational levels, offering rich contextual understanding of Qur'anic instruction in schools. However, its limitations included a relatively small sample size within a single urban context and the absence of student and parental perspectives, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research is therefore recommended to involve multiple stakeholders, expand to diverse geographical and institutional settings, and explore intervention-based or mixed-methods designs to further develop effective and sustainable models of Qur'anic learning in formal education.

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