



From Memorizing to Internalizing: Tahfidz Extracurricular as a Model for Religious Character Education in Islamic Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to analyze the role of tahfidz extracurricular activities as a model for religious character education in Islamic elementary schools, focusing on the transformation from memorization to internalization.

Methodology: This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design conducted at MI Nurul Rahman Bondowoso. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation.

Main Findings: The findings reveal that structured and repetitive tahfidz activities contribute significantly to the development of students' discipline, spiritual habits, and religious character. The internalization of values occurs gradually through memorization, repetition, habituation, and teacher modeling. The triangulation results indicate that structured activities, spirituality by repetition, and values by teacher modeling shape discipline. However, the internalization process varies among students, indicating certain limitations in achieving optimal outcomes.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study offers a conceptual contribution by positioning tahfidz extracurricular activities not merely as a memorization practice but as a systematic model for transforming memorization into internalized religious values. It highlights the "memorizing to internalizing" framework as a distinctive approach to religious character education in Islamic elementary schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, strengthening religious character education has become an increasingly urgent issue, particularly amid the challenges of the digital era, which is marked by moral degradation, declining discipline, and weakening spiritual awareness among students [1], [2]. The rapid development of information technology not only provides positive impacts but also brings consequences in the form of behavioral changes among the younger generation, who tend to be more pragmatic and individualistic [3]-[5]. This condition requires educational institutions, especially Islamic education, to focus not only on cognitive aspects but also on the holistic formation of character [6], [7]. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, as an Islamic primary education institution, holds a strategic position in shaping the foundation of religious character from an early age [8], [9]. However, the implementation of character education in many institutions remains normative and has not yet had a deep impact on the internalization

of values [10]-[12]. Therefore, a more integrative and contextual approach is needed to instill religious values in students [13], [14]

Specifically, the tahfidz Al-Qur'an program, developed across various madrasahs and Islamic schools, demonstrates significant potential to support the formation of students' religious character [15], [16]. Tahfidz activities do not merely involve memorization but also encompass spiritual dimensions, discipline, and continuous habituation [17]-[19]. However, in practice, many tahfidz programs remain oriented toward quantitative memorization achievements, without being balanced by efforts to internalize Qur'anic values in daily life [20], [21]. This situation creates a gap between memorization ability and students' religious behavior [17], [22]. In fact, the primary goal of Islamic education is to produce individuals with noble character, not merely those who possess academic competence or memorization skills. This phenomenon indicates the need for a transformation in the approach to tahfidz activities, shifting from mere memorization toward value internalization [23], [24].

Various studies have examined the relationship between tahfidz programs and character formation; however, the findings indicate that the integration between the two has not been fully optimal. Research by Anisaturrizqi et al., emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in pesantren-based tahfidz education [17]. However, it remains conceptual and has not been extensively explored for implementation at the primary school level. Meanwhile, Aisyah and Nahar, through the Living Qur'an approach, demonstrate that the internalization of Qur'anic values can shape students' character [25]. However, they do not specifically relate it to extracurricular tahfidz activities. Another study by Dzulkifli et al. [22] highlights the importance of religious internalization activities in shaping the personality of tahfidz students, but it focuses more on the secondary school context. Thus, there is still room to examine how tahfidz programs at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level can be developed as a more applicable and contextual model of religious character education.

The urgency of this study is further underscored by the field conditions, particularly at MI Nurur Rahman Bondowoso, the research site. This madrasah has implemented an extracurricular tahfidz program to strengthen students' religious character. However, there has been no in-depth study on how the tahfidz process transforms Qur'anic values from mere memorization into part of students' daily behavior. In addition, there is no systematic model that explains the stages of value internalization within these activities. This study is expected to provide both empirical and conceptual contributions to the development of a more effective tahfidz learning model [6], [26], [27]. Therefore, the findings of this research are not only theoretically relevant but also have practical implications for the development of character education in madrasahs [28], [29]

Compared to previous studies, this research has fundamental differences in focus and approach. The study by Azizah et al., emphasizes the culture of religious schools [18]. In contrast, Jannah and Shobahiya examine the role of tahfidz extracurricular activities in general character formation, without delving deeply into the internalization process [30], [31]. Firnanda et al. link tahfidz to the Merdeka Curriculum but do not develop a conceptual model that explains the transformation from memorization to internalization [32]. Meanwhile, Hishnuddin and Jazilurrahman [15] highlight the importance of internalizing Qur'anic values but do not specifically examine the context of tahfidz extracurricular activities at the primary level. This indicates a research gap that needs to be addressed, particularly in integrating memorization and internalization into a single framework for religious character education.

Based on the above explanation, the novelty of this study lies in the development of a conceptual model, "From Memorizing to Internalizing," within tahfidz extracurricular activities in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. This model emphasizes not only memorization achievement but also the process of internalizing Qur'anic values through habituation, reflection, and real-life practice. The study also offers an integrative approach that connects cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in Islamic education. Thus, this research is expected to contribute new insights to the development of religious character education theory based on the Qur'an, as well as to serve as a practical reference for Islamic educational institutions in managing tahfidz programs more effectively and meaningfully [6], [7].

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Type and Design of Research

This study employs a case study design and a qualitative methodology [33], [34]. Since the goal of this study is to fully comprehend the process of internalizing religious values in extracurricular tahfidz activities, which cannot be measured numerically alone, a qualitative approach was selected [35]. The significance, experiences, and dynamics of social interactions throughout the implementation of the Tahfidz program are the study's main subjects.

Because this study aims to examine a single case thoroughly, a case study design was employed to examine the introduction of extracurricular tahfidz at MI Nurur Rahman Bondowoso. Researchers can get a thorough and contextual picture of how the process "from memorizing to internalizing" takes place in a natural environment, thanks to the case study. In addition to 92 fourth-grade (upper grade) students, the madrasah

principal, tahfidz instructors, and class teachers served as supporting informants. Purposive sampling was employed in the subject selection process, with active participation in the Tahfidz program as a criterion.

2.2. Research Tools and Validity of Data

The researcher herself served as the main human instrument in this study, contributing to the data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Several auxiliary tools were employed to aid with data collection, including the following:

2.2.1. A sheet of observations

The main tool for directly observing student conduct during extracurricular tahfidz events was the observation sheet[36]. Participatory observations were conducted to obtain contextual and naturalistic information about the internalization process. Discipline (attendance and punctuality), consistency or steadfastness in memorization, social interaction (student collaboration and attitudes toward teachers), and religious practices (regular prayer, manners, and devotion during activities) were also noted markers. The observation sheet was developed based on a study of religious character education theory and professional opinions in Islamic education to ensure the instrument's validity. In the meantime, systematic field notes and consistent, repeated observations at various times (prolonged engagement) improved instrument reliability[37], [38]. To confirm the validity of the results, observational data were also triangulated with interview and documentation data.

2.2.2. Guidelines for Semi-Structured Interviews

Teachers, tahfidz instructors, and students were among the informants from whom detailed information was gathered using semi-structured interview guidelines. To enable more extensive data analysis of informant responses, this instrument was designed with flexibility in mind. The interviews focused on methods for implementing the tahfidz program, the process of internalizing Qur'anic values, learning challenges, and the impact of activities on students' religious character development[37], [39]. By creating a questionnaire grounded in theory and prior research findings and having it evaluated by specialists in Islamic education and research methods, the validity of the interview instrument was ensured. Member verification, which involved confirming interview findings with informants and using interview recordings to ensure data accuracy, improved reliability. Peer debriefing and methodical analysis also helped to ensure consistency in data interpretation.

2.2.3 Documentation

The information gathered through observation and interviews was strengthened and supplemented by documentation. The Tahfidz activity schedule, student memorization control books, school policies on the Tahfidz program and character education, and activity photos as factual evidence of program execution are examples of documentation. Because it is based on official, genuine data from the educational institution, the documentation tool has a high degree of legitimacy. The researcher compared data across relevant documents (cross-document analysis) and conducted a document authenticity check to ensure reliability. To improve the validity and consistency of the overall research findings, documentation data were also used as part of technical triangulation.

2.3. Research Procedures

Stage 1: Getting Ready

The first phase, which greatly influences the direction and caliber of the research, is preparation. At this point, the researcher first determines the study's subject, focusing on how tahfidz (memorization) activities shift from mere memorization to the internalization of religious principles[40]. To ensure the topic's applicability to field conditions, this focus was established through a survey of the literature and preliminary observations at the research site. The researcher then developed a research tool comprising observation sheets, interview protocols, and documentation formats tailored to the study's goals. After that, expert judgment was used to validate the constructed instrument and ensure that the indicators aligned with the theoretical ideas. To further ensure the instrument's high validity, the researcher made revisions based on professional advice. Thus, the goal of this preparation phase is to ensure that every research instrument is prepared for optimal application in the field.

Step 2: Information Gathering

At the research site, data were collected regularly and methodically using a variety of complementary methods. To examine student behavior, social relationships, and emerging religious practices during tahfidz extracurricular events, the researcher employed participant observation. Key informants, such as teachers, memorizing instructors, and students, were also interviewed in depth to learn more about program implementation techniques, the process of internalizing values, and the difficulties faced[41]. Following predetermined standards, interviews were conducted with flexibility and attention to detail. To bolster the conclusions, researchers also gathered a variety of supporting materials, including activity calendars, memory control books, and school policies. To get thorough and detailed data, the complete data gathering process was carried out repeatedly and concurrently. As a result, this stage produced rich and varied data from multiple sources.

Step 3: Data Processing

Systematic data processing was the next step after data collection to make the analysis easier. To ensure thorough and accurate documentation of all material gathered, interview data were first transcribed verbatim. Subsequently, the researchers coded the data pertinent to the research objective. Finding patterns, themes, and categories in the field data was the goal of this coding procedure. Following coding, the data were categorized into themes or common meanings. Researchers can organize and manage their data more methodically by using this categorization technique [42]. To make sure no crucial information is overlooked, researchers also double-check the data. As a result, this stage of data processing acts as an essential link between data gathering and data analysis.

Step 4: Data Analysis

The interactive model put forth by Miles and Huberman, which incorporates data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, is used for data analysis in this study[35], [43]. Data reduction involves selecting, streamlining, and concentrating information pertinent to the study's goals. Researchers can extract crucial information from complex data using this procedure. To aid comprehension and interpretation, the condensed data is presented as tables, matrices, or descriptive narratives. Researchers can observe patterns of correlation between variables more clearly with this data display. Concluding is the last phase, carried out gradually and regularly checked throughout the study process. In light of the research setting, the conclusions reached are both descriptive and interpretive. As a result, data analysis is conducted continuously throughout the study.

Step 5: Data Validation

The purpose of the data validation stage is to guarantee the reliability and validity of the study findings. Researchers evaluate data from different informants and data-gathering methods using triangulation techniques, including source and technical triangulation. To make sure the data accurately reflects reality, researchers also perform member checks, which entail verifying the results with informants. This method is essential for preventing data misunderstanding. To discuss the analysis results and obtain a more unbiased viewpoint, researchers hold peer debriefings. This procedure lessens subjective bias and enhances the quality of data interpretation. As a result, extensive data validation is conducted to ensure the reliability of the study's findings.

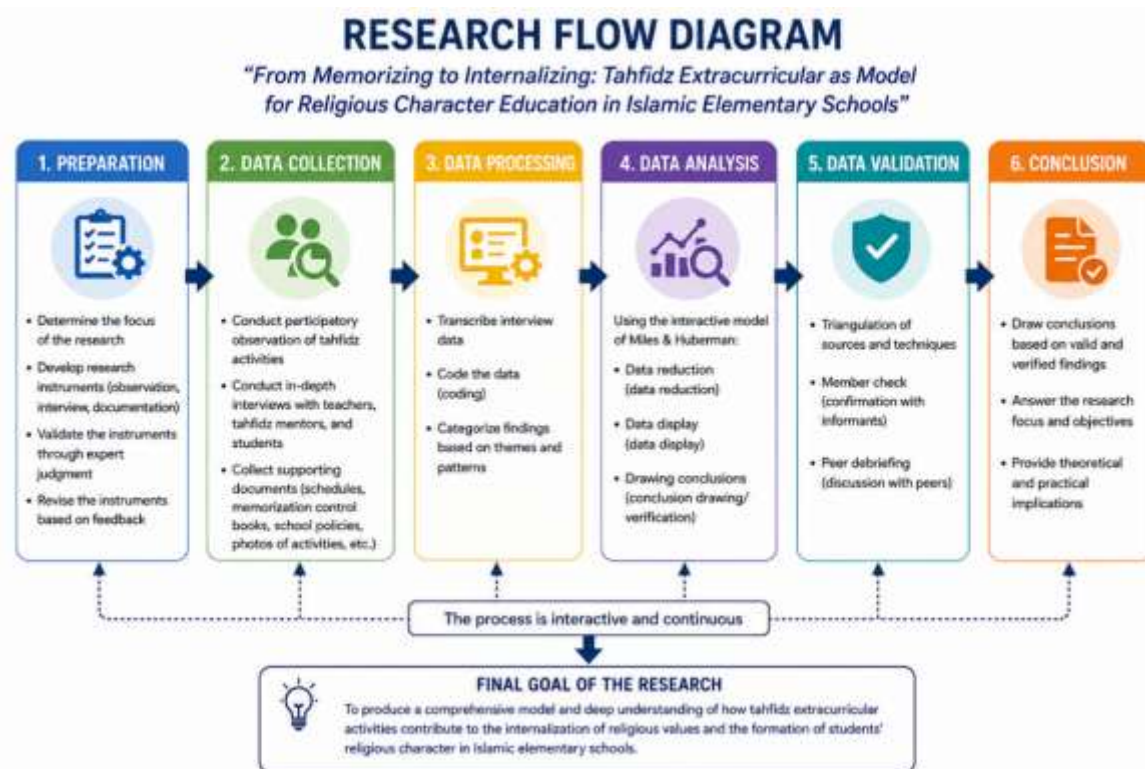


Diagram 1. Research flow

2.4. Presentation of Data

Data display comes next after data reduction. The process of arranging chosen and classified information into a methodical manner that is simple to comprehend, evaluate, and interpret is known as data presentation[44]. Typically, descriptive narratives, tables, matrices, charts, or correlations between categories are used to convey data in qualitative research. Effective data presentation will make it easier for researchers to understand the connections between their findings and make the process of generating meaning easier.

Based on the primary themes that surfaced from observations, interviews, and recordings, the material in this study is presented narratively[45]. For instance, descriptive accounts of how students arrive on time, observe the opening prayer, and begin memorization systematically are used to convey data on student discipline during Tahfidz exercises. To show how students respect the teacher, listen to one another, and work together during murojaah exercises, data on social interactions are provided. In the meantime, information on religious rituals is displayed to illustrate how students often pray, behave politely, and show reverence during these activities.

To make the relationships between categories clearer, data can also be displayed in tables or matrices, in addition to narratives. Tables, for instance, can be used to compare results from different data sources, including madrasah principals, teachers, and students. The relationship between tahfidz implementation tactics and shifts in students' religious behavior can be demonstrated using matrices. Researchers can more easily spot patterns, similarities, contrasts, and developing trends in the subject with this kind of data display. Reexamining the data's consistency and completeness is another function of data presentation. Researchers can ascertain whether the collected data is sufficient to address the research focus or whether more data is required through a structured presentation. As a result, data presentation serves as both an analytical tool that aids researchers in comprehending the data's meaning more thoroughly and methodically, and a presentation of findings.

2.5. Making Inferences and Confirming

Conclusions and verification are the last steps in data analysis. The act of interpreting the significance of the reduced and presented data to produce a thorough understanding of the topic under study is known as concluding[46]. Conclusions in qualitative research are developed gradually, based on patterns, correlations, and trends that emerge from field data rather than being hastily drawn.

To address the research questions, the researcher now examines the accumulated results in narrative and categorical form. For instance, the researcher concluded that the extracurricular tahfidz (memorization of the Qur'an) activity at MI Nurur Rahman Bondowoso serves as a medium for internalizing religious values, as reflected in the students' discipline, consistency, etiquette, and spiritual attitudes. After comparing data from multiple sources and ensuring consistency across results, the researcher reached this conclusion.

Throughout the analysis process, verification was done regularly to make sure the data actually supported the results. To make sure that no interpretations differed from the empirical facts, the researcher verified field notes, interview findings, and supporting documentation twice[47]. The researcher went back to the field to get more information if conflicting data was discovered. This procedure shows how results in qualitative research are flexible, open-ended, and can be reinforced by field data.

As a result, the study's conclusions not only address the research question but also offer a better understanding of how religious beliefs are internalized through tahfidz activities. Because the conclusions have undergone a methodical process of data reduction, presentation, and verification, they are legitimate. In general, data analysis was conducted throughout the study, from the first phase of data collection to the last. The researcher produced rich, comprehensive, and scientifically valid results through this ongoing process. This study is anticipated to provide a thorough understanding of the role of tahfidz extracurricular activities in fostering students' religious character, using the Miles and Huberman model.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Overview of the Tahfidz Extracurricular Program

The tahfidz extracurricular program at MI Nurur Rahman Bondowoso is systematically designed as an integrative model combining Qur'anic memorization with religious character education. Based on participatory observation, the program is conducted daily through structured stages, including opening prayer, memorization submission (setoran), repetition (muroja'ah), and closing prayer. Each student is assigned clear and measurable memorization targets, which are continuously monitored through individual control books. Document analysis indicates that this program is institutionally embedded, supported by formal school policies that position tahfidz as part of the broader character education system. This finding demonstrates that tahfidz is not merely an extracurricular activity, but a strategic institutional program aimed at shaping students' character holistically.

Observational findings further reveal that the program emphasizes not only cognitive achievement but also behavioral habituation. Students are consistently trained to maintain proper etiquette (adab), such as sitting respectfully, listening attentively, and showing respect toward teachers and peers. Field notes indicate that these practices are repeated systematically, leading to stable behavioral patterns over time. A teacher emphasized: "We do not only pursue memorization, but also shape students' attitudes according to Qur'anic values." This statement reinforces the notion that the tahfidz program operates within a broader pedagogical framework. Consequently, learning is not limited to memorization but extends to character formation.

Interviews with students confirm the existence of structured rules and accountability within the program. One student stated: "Every day we must submit memorization; if we are not ready, we have to repeat it the next

day.” This reflects a controlled learning environment that fosters responsibility and discipline. Supporting this, documentation such as schedules and memorization logs shows that teachers conduct systematic monitoring and periodic evaluation. Analytical notes highlight that this structured system ensures continuity and consistency in student development. Thus, both subjective and objective data confirm the program’s structured nature.

Through triangulation of observation, interviews, and documentation, the findings indicate that the tahfidz program is well-organized, systematically monitored, and oriented toward religious character development. Analytical synthesis suggests that program effectiveness is influenced not only by structural design but also by implementation consistency and teacher engagement. The integration of these elements forms a strong foundation for transforming memorization into internalization. Therefore, this program serves as an initial stage in the broader process of value internalization. It provides a structured pathway from cognitive engagement toward behavioral transformation.

3.2. Discipline Formation through Structured Memorization

The findings indicate that structured memorization significantly contributes to the development of student discipline. Observational data show that most students attend sessions punctually and consistently follow established procedures. Students are observed preparing their memorization before sessions begin, reflecting an emerging sense of responsibility. Indicators such as punctuality, consistency, and adherence to rules are clearly visible during activities. These behavioral patterns suggest that discipline is cultivated through repeated structured engagement.

Teacher interviews reveal that daily memorization targets serve as a key mechanism for developing discipline. One teacher explained: “Students become more organized because they have daily targets. If they don’t prepare, they cannot submit their memorization.” This illustrates how structured expectations encourage time management and responsibility. Analytical notes suggest that discipline develops gradually through repeated exposure to structured demands. Over time, these practices become internalized habits. Thus, discipline is not imposed but constructed through routine.

Documentation in the form of memorization control books further supports this finding. Records show consistent tracking of student progress, indicating a strong accountability system. Most students demonstrate steady improvement, reflecting the effectiveness of structured monitoring. However, observational data also reveal variation among students. Some students struggle to meet targets, particularly those with consistently lower motivation. This indicates that the formation of discipline is uneven and influenced by individual factors.

Triangulated findings suggest that discipline development is a gradual and differentiated process. While many students show significant improvement, others require additional support. Analytical interpretation highlights motivation and environmental support as key variables. Therefore, structured systems must be complemented by individualized approaches. This ensures that all students can benefit equally from the program. Hence, discipline formation is both systemic and personal.

3.3. Development of Spiritual Awareness through Repetitive Engagement

The study finds that repeated engagement with Qur’anic verses contributes to the development of students’ spiritual awareness. Observations indicate that students exhibit increased calmness, focus, and attentiveness during activities. Emotional engagement becomes more visible during muroja’ah sessions. Students appear more reflective and composed over time. This suggests that repetition fosters not only memorization but also inner awareness.

Student interviews reveal personal spiritual experiences emerging from repetition. One student stated: “When I repeat the verses many times, I feel calmer and more focused.” This indicates that repetition functions as a reflective process. Teachers also observed similar changes, noting: “Over time, students become more respectful and aware of their behavior.” These findings highlight the affective dimension of learning. Thus, spiritual awareness develops through sustained interaction.

Analytical notes suggest that repetition serves both cognitive and affective functions. Documentation confirms that muroja’ah is a core component of the program. However, not all students experience deep internalization. Some remain at the level of mechanical repetition. This indicates variability in spiritual development. Therefore, repetition alone is insufficient for full internalization.

Triangulation shows that spiritual awareness develops gradually and unevenly. Individual differences such as motivation and emotional readiness influence outcomes. This highlights the need for strategies that integrate meaning-making with memorization. Without this, internalization remains partial. Thus, spiritual development requires both repetition and reflection. The process is dynamic and individualized.

3.4. Teacher as a Central Agent of Internalization (Role Model)

Teachers play a central role in facilitating the internalization of values within the tahfidz program. Observations show that teachers actively guide not only memorization but also student behavior. They demonstrate

patience, discipline, and respectful communication. Students implicitly imitate these behaviors. Thus, teachers function as living models of Qur'anic values.

Student interviews confirm the strong influence of teacher modeling. One student stated, "We follow what the teacher does. If the teacher is calm and patient, we try to be like that." This demonstrates the effectiveness of observational learning. Teachers also emphasize value integration, stating: "Tahfidz is not only about memorizing, but about how students behave according to the Qur'an." These insights highlight the importance of role modeling. Learning occurs through interaction, not just instruction.

Documentation shows that teachers consistently embed values in daily activities. Analytical notes indicate that internalization occurs through sustained social interaction. However, effectiveness depends on teacher consistency. Inconsistent modeling may weaken value transmission. Therefore, teacher quality is a critical factor.

Triangulated data confirm that teachers are the primary agents of internalization. Their dual role as instructors and role models is essential. The success of the program depends heavily on teacher behavior. Thus, professional development becomes crucial. Teacher integrity directly influences student character formation.

3.5. Habituation as a Mechanism for Value Internalization

Habituation emerges as a key mechanism in transforming behavior into internalized values. Observations show that activities such as prayer, muroja'ah, and memorization are repeated daily. These routines create stable behavioral patterns. Over time, students perform them automatically. This indicates successful behavioral conditioning. A teacher explained: "If students repeat good habits every day, it becomes part of their character." This supports the role of repetition in habit formation. Documentation confirms that routines are systematically embedded. Analytical findings suggest strong conditioning effects. Behavior becomes normalized through repetition. However, not all habituation leads to deep understanding. Some students perform routines mechanically. This reveals a gap between action and meaning. Thus, habituation alone is insufficient. It must be combined with reflective processes.

Triangulation confirms that habituation is effective for behavioral formation but limited for deep internalization. Reflection is needed to bridge this gap. Therefore, programs must integrate both elements. This ensures meaningful learning. Habituation should be complemented by understanding.

3.6. The Gap Between Memorization and Internalization

The study identifies a critical gap between memorization and internalization. Observations show that some students treat tahfidz as an academic obligation. One student stated: "I memorize because it is required, not because I understand it." This highlights the lack of intrinsic engagement. Memorization becomes goal-oriented rather than meaning-oriented. Analytical findings indicate that strong emphasis on targets may shift focus to cognitive achievement. Documentation lacks structured reflective activities. This reinforces the existence of the gap. Internalization requires deeper engagement. Without it, learning remains superficial.

Triangulation confirms that internalization is not automatic. It requires intentional pedagogical strategies. Reflection and contextualization are necessary. Therefore, program design must evolve. It should move beyond memorization. This finding highlights an important limitation. It also opens opportunities for improvement. Integrating meaning-making is essential. Thus, bridging this gap becomes a key challenge. Internalization must be intentionally facilitated.

3.7. Cross-Data Validation (Triangulation Findings)

Triangulation reveals strong consistency across observation, interviews, and documentation. Each data source supports the same core findings. The triangulation process demonstrates a high level of consistency across observation, interview, and documentation data. Observations provide direct behavioral evidence, interviews reveal subjective experiences and perceptions, while documentation offers objective and systematic records. The convergence of these three data sources strengthens the credibility and validity of the findings. The data consistently indicate that discipline is shaped by structure, spirituality by repetition, and values by teacher modeling. Analytical notes show recurring patterns across datasets. This strengthens research reliability. Findings are not incidental. They are systematically supported.

Teacher and student narratives reinforce each other. Documentation validates their claims. This alignment increases credibility. Data integration enhances validity. Thus, findings are trustworthy. Triangulation confirms that the tahfidz program effectively supports character education. However, effectiveness varies among students. This nuance is important. It reflects real conditions. Therefore, findings are both valid and contextually grounded.

Table 1. Cross-Data Validation (Triangulation Findings)

No	Key Theme	Observation Findings	Interview Findings	Documentation Evidence	Triangulation Interpretation
1	Discipline Formation	Students attend on time, follow	Teacher: "Students become more	Memorization control books	Strong alignment indicates discipline

No	Key Theme	Observation Findings	Interview Findings	Documentation Evidence	Triangulation Interpretation
		structured memorization routines, and consistently submit memorization	organized because they have daily targets." Student: "We must submit memorization every day."	show daily progress tracking and consistency	is formed through structured routines and continuous monitoring
2	Spiritual Awareness	Students appear calmer, more focused, and emotionally engaged during muroja'ah	Student: "When I repeat the verses, I feel calmer." Teacher: "Students become more respectful over time."	Program schedule shows intensive repetition (muroja'ah) as a core activity	Repetition contributes to both emotional engagement and emerging spiritual awareness
3	Teacher Role Modeling	Teachers demonstrate patience, discipline, and respectful behavior during sessions	Student: "We follow what the teacher does." Teacher: "Tahfidz is about behavior, not just memorizing."	Program guidelines emphasize teacher involvement and supervision	Teacher behavior directly influences student character through modeling (social learning)
4	Habituation Process	Repetitive daily routines (prayer, memorization, muroja'ah) observed consistently	Teacher: "Good habits become character if repeated daily."	Structured schedules and activity logs confirm routine implementation	Habituation effectively shapes behavior, but requires reinforcement for deeper meaning
5	Memorization vs Internalization Gap	Some students perform tasks mechanically without visible reflection	Student: "I memorize because it is required."	Lack of documented reflective activities (e.g., meaning discussion sessions)	Indicates a gap between cognitive memorization and value internalization
6	Student Motivation Variation	Differences observed in student consistency and engagement	Teacher: "Some students are consistent, others need reminders."	Progress records show uneven achievement among students	Individual differences influence effectiveness of the program
7	Program Structure	Activities are organized, systematic, and consistent across sessions	Teacher: "We already have a clear system."	Formal schedules, control books, and institutional policies	Confirms that program success is supported by strong structural design
8	Character Development Outcomes	Observable improvement in discipline, respect, and behavior	Student: "I try to be more patient like my teacher."	Evaluation records and behavioral notes support changes	Character development is evident but varies across individuals

The table 1, shows that discipline is primarily shaped by structured routines, spirituality by repeated engagement, and character values by teacher modeling. However, it also highlights an important gap between memorization and internalization, as well as variations in student motivation and outcomes. Overall, triangulation confirms that the tahfidz program effectively supports character education, but its impact is not uniform across all students. This indicates that while the program is structurally strong, it still requires adaptive and reflective strategies to ensure deeper and more equitable internalization of values.

3.8. Conceptual Model: From Memorizing to Internalizing

The conceptual model illustrates that internalization is a gradual and multi-stage process. It begins with structured input and continues through repetition and modeling. Students actively engage in guided activities. Over time, this leads to behavioral outcomes. Discipline and character emerge as outputs. However, not all students reach full internalization. Some remain at a memorization level. A teacher stated, "Not all students immediately understand the meaning, but the process continues." This highlights process-based development. Internalization requires time. It cannot be forced.

The model emphasizes complexity and multiple influencing factors. These include motivation, interaction, and environment. Internalization involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. Therefore, it is multidimensional. Learning must address all aspects. This model provides a framework for future program development. It highlights both strengths and limitations. The transformation process is dynamic. Thus, educational strategies must be adaptive. Internalization is a journey, not an instant outcome.

3.9. Strengths, Limitations, and Mitigation Strategies

The study highlights several strengths of the tahfidz program in supporting character education. The structured system, clear targets, and monitoring mechanisms ensure consistency and accountability. A teacher stated, "We already have a clear system; students just follow it and we monitor them daily." Teacher modeling further strengthens value internalization. A student noted: "We follow what the teacher does." These elements create a strong educational foundation.

However, limitations are also identified. The gap between memorization and understanding remains significant. A student admitted: "I memorize because it is required." Variation in motivation affects outcomes. A teacher added, "Some students are consistent, others need reminders." Reflective activities are still limited.

To address these issues, several strategies are proposed. Teachers emphasized: "We need to help students understand, not just memorize." Reflective learning should be integrated. Differentiated instruction is also necessary. Teacher training should be enhanced. In addition, strengthening intrinsic motivation is essential. A student stated, "When I understand the meaning, I feel more connected." This shows the importance of meaning-making. Therefore, program improvement must be holistic. Addressing limitations ensures sustainability. The program can evolve into a more effective model of character education.

The findings indicate that the tahfidz extracurricular program enhances student engagement through structured, repetitive, and interactive learning processes. This aligns with pedagogical principles emphasizing active engagement, where students participate directly in memorization (*setoran*), repetition (*muroja'ah*), and teacher-guided feedback. Such structured interaction creates continuous learning cycles that promote discipline and responsibility, as reflected in the statement, "*Students become more organized because they have daily targets.*" This finding is consistent with research by Firdausiyah & Az Zafi [11] which highlights that structured tahfidz programs significantly cultivate discipline and responsibility among students.

Moreover, the interactive nature of teacher-student relationships strengthens engagement and learning outcomes. Teachers act not only as instructors but also as facilitators, providing immediate feedback and guidance. This supports the findings of Rosadi et al., who emphasize that tahfidz learning, from Bandura's perspective, relies heavily on social interaction and modeling [12]. The repetitive nature of *muroja'ah* also reinforces cognitive retention while fostering emotional engagement, as students reported feeling "calmer and more focused" during repetition. This is further supported by Subawaihini, who argues that repeated engagement with the Qur'an contributes to spiritual development through experiential learning [27].

Despite high engagement, the findings reveal that not all students achieve a deep understanding. Some remain at the level of mechanical memorization, indicating a gap between participation and comprehension. This supports Yusuf et al., who found that tahfidz programs often emphasize memorization outcomes over reflective understanding[31]. Therefore, while structured and interactive learning enhances engagement, it must be complemented with reflective strategies to achieve deeper internalization.

The findings strongly align with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, particularly regarding the role of teachers as role models. Students' statements such as "We follow what the teacher does" confirm that observational learning plays a central role in character formation. This is consistent with Rosadi et al., who highlight that teacher behavior significantly influences student character in tahfidz settings[12]. Similarly, Hishnuddin & Jazilurrahman emphasize that internalization of Qur'anic values occurs through social interaction and exemplary conduct[15].

In addition, the concept of habituation observed in this study aligns with behaviorist theory, where repeated actions shape behavior. Daily routines such as memorization and *muroja'ah* function as reinforcement mechanisms that gradually build discipline and religious character. This finding is supported by Trisnantari et al., who argue that habituation is a key strategy in strengthening character through repeated religious practices[14]. Furthermore, Siregar et al., found that spiritual values are effectively internalized through continuous and structured extracurricular activities[24].

From a constructivist perspective, students' active involvement in the learning process supports the idea that knowledge is constructed through experience. However, the identified gap between memorization and internalization indicates that cognitive engagement alone is insufficient. This aligns with Aisyah & Nahar, who

propose the Living Qur'an approach to bridge the gap between memorization and contextual understanding[25]. Similarly, Anisaturrizqi et al., emphasize the need for holistic tahfidz education that integrates memorization with character formation[17]. Thus, this study confirms prior research and extends it by highlighting the importance of integrating behavioral, social, and reflective learning approaches in tahfidz education.

The transformation from memorizing to internalizing is clearly evidenced through triangulated data from observation, interviews, and documentation. Observational findings show consistent behavioral patterns, including discipline, repetition, and structured participation. Documentation further confirms this through systematic records, such as memorization logs and activity schedules, which indicate institutional support for the process. These findings align with Elvarisna et al., who highlight the importance of program management in ensuring consistent learning outcomes in tahfidz education[28].

Interviews provide deeper insight into students' internal experiences, revealing both successful and incomplete internalization. Some students reported emotional engagement ("*I feel calmer*"), indicating affective internalization, while others admitted purely mechanical memorization. This variation supports the findings of Dzulkifli et al., who emphasize that the internalization of religious values occurs gradually and varies among students[22]. Similarly, Syahweli & Rahmi note that character formation through tahfidz programs depends on both structural and individual factors[6].

The triangulation of these data sources demonstrates that internalization is a multi-layered process involving behavioral practice, emotional engagement, and cognitive understanding. However, the absence of structured reflective activities limits the depth of internalization. This finding is consistent with Siregar et al., who argue that value internalization requires intentional strategies that connect learning activities with real-life application[5]. Thus, the tahfidz program represents a structured pathway from memorization to internalization, but its effectiveness depends on integrating reflection and meaning-making processes.

This study makes several important contributions to the field of Islamic education. First, it provides an empirical model that explains the transformation from memorizing to internalizing in tahfidz extracurricular programs. Unlike previous studies such as Fadeli et al. and Kalimatusyaro, which focus primarily on program implementation, this study emphasizes the process and mechanisms of value internalization[23], [29].

Second, this study contributes methodologically by employing triangulation to enhance the validity and reliability of the data. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of educational processes compared to single-method studies. It also responds to calls from Widodo et al., for more integrative research in Islamic character education[7]. Third, the study introduces a conceptual framework linking structure, repetition, teacher modeling, and habituation as key components of character formation. This framework extends previous research by Azizah et al. and Apriyani et al., which emphasize the role of school culture and religious activities in character development[13], [18]. Finally, this research contributes contextually by providing empirical evidence from an Islamic elementary school, enriching global discourse on religious character education.

The findings have significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study suggests that effective character education requires integrating behaviorist, social learning, and constructivist approaches. Memorization alone is insufficient without reflection and contextualization. This supports the argument by Hishnuddin & Jazilurrahman that transformative Islamic education must go beyond cognitive learning[15]. Practically, schools should redesign tahfidz programs to include reflective and contextual learning activities. This aligns with recommendations from Aisyah & Nahar, who emphasize the importance of connecting Qur'anic learning with real-life contexts[25]. Teachers should also be trained as role models and facilitators, as emphasized by Kartikasari et al., who highlight the importance of teacher involvement in character formation[4].

Additionally, the variation in student outcomes indicates the need for differentiated instruction. This is consistent with findings from Azwar, which emphasize the importance of addressing individual student needs in tahfidz education[10]. Schools must also strengthen monitoring systems while allowing flexibility to accommodate diverse learners. Thus, the implication is that tahfidz programs must evolve into holistic character education systems that integrate memorization, reflection, and application.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, tahfidz programs should incorporate reflective learning activities, such as tafsir discussions and value-application exercises. This recommendation is supported by Siregar et al., who emphasize the importance of reflective strategies in value internalization[5]. Second, teacher training programs should focus on pedagogical strategies for character education, including modeling, interaction, and emotional engagement. This aligns with findings from Salim et al., which highlight the importance of teacher roles in pesantren-based education systems[3].

Third, schools should adopt differentiated learning approaches to address variations in student motivation and ability. This is consistent with Yusuf et al., who identify student diversity as a key challenge in tahfidz programs [31]. Fourth, future research should explore the longitudinal impacts of tahfidz programs to understand long-term character development better. Studies such as Noviyani suggest that program sustainability plays a key role in educational outcomes [9]. Finally, policymakers should support integrating tahfidz programs into broader character education frameworks. This aligns with Rahman et al., who emphasize the importance of extracurricular programs in strengthening character education [48].

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the extracurricular tahfidz (memorization of the *Qur'an*) activity at MI Nurul Rahman Bondowoso is an effective way to help students build their religious character and memorize the *Qur'an*. Students develop discipline, consistency, and spiritual habits in their daily lives through a structured, systematic, and repetition-based learning process. Additionally, the teacher's role as a role model (*uswah*) is essential to the process of internalizing values, as children mimic the teacher's attitudes and behaviors, in addition to memorizing them. As a result, tahfidz is a comprehensive tool for character education that covers behavioral, affective, and cognitive elements. The outcomes of data triangulation from observations, interviews, and documentation consistently show that internalizing religious values is a gradual process that starts with memorization. Numerous factors, including the level of training, the classroom setting, and each student's preparedness, affect this process. But not every kid achieves the best internalization, which suggests differences in character development. To optimize the internalization process, a more flexible and introspective mentoring approach is therefore required. Overall, this study shows that extracurricular memorization is a successful strategy, but it still needs to be strengthened in terms of comprehension and reflection on its value.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization, Z.F.; Methodology, Z.F.; Formal Analysis, Z.F.; Investigation, Z.F.; Data Curation, Z.F.; Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Z.F.; Writing – Review & Editing, Z.F. and I.N.L.; Visualization, Z.F.; Supervision, I.N.L.; Project Administration, I.N.L.; Funding Acquisition, Z.F. and I.N.L.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. All participants were provided with clear information regarding the research objectives, procedures, and their rights prior to participation. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality as well as anonymity were strictly maintained. Consent for student participation was also obtained from the school authorities.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest. This research was self-funded by the authors, and the funding source had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analysis, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Grammarly to assist with grammar checking and language refinement, as well as AI-assisted tools for generating research-related images. The authors have carefully reviewed and edited all outputs and take full responsibility for the content of this publication.

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