

Qur'anic Memorization in 'Ajamic Communities: a Systematic Review of Trends, Challenges, and Functional Reception

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Abstract. This study investigates research trends in Qur'anic memorization within the 'Ajamic community (non-Arabic speaking Muslims), a practice often criticized as “parrot learning” and therefore marginalized in academic discourse. This research is urgent because it addresses limited scholarly attention given to non-Arabic contexts, despite the persistence of memorization traditions that shape religious identity and communal life. Using a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA protocol, the search was conducted in the Scopus database and restricted to journal articles published between 2013 and 2023. From 1,830 initial records, successive filtering and eligibility criteria yielded nine relevant studies, which were analyzed qualitatively to answer five research questions concerning memorization methods, inhibiting and supporting factors, impact and role, and motivational aspects. The findings reveal that memorization in 'Ajamic communities is predominantly performed through oral repetition without immediate comprehension of meaning, yet remains resilient despite structural challenges such as limited facilities, time constraints, and secular critiques. Positive impacts include enhanced learning abilities and significant social roles for memorizers, particularly as imams and proofreaders in communal worship, while motivations are sustained by religious devotion and communal identity. The novelty of this study lies in its systematic mapping of Qur'anic memorization research in non-Arabic contexts, which has not been comprehensively reviewed before. It contributes to the development of tafsir studies by shifting scholarly attention from exegetical and literary receptions toward oral and functional dimensions, thereby challenging reductive assumptions about rote learning and identifying gaps for future inquiry.

Keywords: Qur'anic Memorization, Methods, Inhibiting and Supporting Factors, Role, Motivation.

Introduction

The Qur'an is defined by many scholars as the Word of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, transmitted collectively, written in a *muṣḥaf* starting from the Al-Fātiḥah and ending with the an-Nās, and reading it is an act of worship.¹ This definition explains two important dimensions: the written dimension, which explains that the Qur'an is written in a *muṣḥaf*, and the oral dimension, which requires the Qur'an to be read constantly. The position of the Qur'an as the word of God also requires it to be a holy book on the one hand and a book of guidance for life.²

This written dimension of the Qur'an initially became the focus of many scholars' studies. Among the many studies conducted related to the written dimension of the Qur'an are the authenticity

¹ Muhammad 'Abdul 'Azīm az-Zarqānī, *Manābil Al-'Irḥān Fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, vol. I (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2010), 18.

² Nāṣiruddīn al-Baidāwī, *Anwār At-Tanzīl Wa Asrār at-Ta'wīl*, vol. III (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā at-Turāṡ al-Islāmī, 1997), 237.

of the Qur'an, the chronology of the Qur'an, and the meaning of the Qur'an.³ The main focus on this literacy aspect presents a negative view of the oral dimension. There is a negative view of the development of the tradition of memorizing the Qur'an, which is not accompanied by an understanding of the meaning of the memorized words.⁴

This negative view slowly diminished along with the increasingly massive study of the Muslim community. W.C. Smith's call to pay more attention to the Muslim community in studying Islam⁵ was followed by other scholars such as Frederick M. Denny,⁶ Kristina Nelson,⁷ and Anna K. Rasmussen.⁸ These scholars focused more on the Qur'an's oral and aural dimensions, including the tradition of memorizing it.

Since its revelation, the Qur'an has always been memorized by the Prophet and his companions.⁹ This tradition has developed widely along with the expansion of the Islamic region. The tradition of memorizing the Qur'an can be found in various Muslim regions, both those that use Arabic as their daily language of conversation¹⁰ and those that do not use Arabic or the 'Ajamī community.¹¹ The word 'Ajamī is used by Arab society to describe communities that are not fluent in Arabic and do not use Arabic in their daily conversations, including communities that already speak Arabic in their native dialect.¹² In the 'Ajamī community context, Quranic memorizing is preserved by using Arabic words. When memorization of the Qur'an is carried out by the 'Ajamī community, the cognitive aspect of the memorized words does not necessarily accompany the developing memorization tradition, and in many cases, the memorizers of the Qur'an do not understand what they are memorizing.¹³

Based on the above conditions, the author is interested in conducting a systematic literature review on Qur'anic memorizing in the 'Ajamī community. This study aims to provide broader insight into how Qur'anic memorizing is practiced by communities that do not use Arabic as their language of communication, and to map research trends related to this issue so that it can inform future studies. The urgency of this research lies in the fact that systematic studies on Qur'anic memorization in non-Arabic contexts remain very limited, even though this tradition plays a crucial role in shaping religious identity, communal authority, and functional reception of the Qur'an. The scientific contribution of

³ Ignaz Goldziher, *Maḏāhibut Tafsīr Al-Islāmī*, trans. 'Abdul Ḥalīm an-Najjār (Kairo: al-Markazul Qaumi lit Tarjamah, 2013), 9–16; Arthur Jeffery, *The Quran as Scripture* (New York: Russel F. Moore co.inc, 1952), 97.

⁴ Gent and Muhammad, "Memorising and Reciting a Text without Understanding Its Meaning: A Multi-Faceted Consideration of This Practice with Particular Reference to the Qur'an," *Religions* 10, no. 7 (July 11, 2019): 3, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10070425>.

⁵ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *What Is Scripture: A Comparative Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 91.

⁶ Frederick M. Denny, "Islam: Qur'an and Hadith," in *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Frederick M. Denny and Rodney L. Taylor (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 94–97.

⁷ Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'an*, New ed. (Cairo ; New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2001), xiv.

⁸ Anne K. Rasmussen, "The Quran in Indonesian Daily Life: The Public Project of Musical Oratory," *Ethnomusicology* 45, no. 1 (2001): 42.

⁹ Muḥammad Sālim Muḥaisin, *Tārikh al-Qur'an al-Karim* (Makkah: Silsilah Da'watul Haq, 1985), 14.

¹⁰ Maura Pilotti, Halah Alkuhayli, and Runna Al Ghazo, "Memorization Practice and Academic Success in Saudi Undergraduate Students," *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives* 18, no. 1 (February 22, 2022): 19–31, <https://doi.org/10.1108/LTHE-08-2020-0030>; Anis Fariji, "Shouting the Qur'an: Exuberance and Playfulness in the Tahzzabt Collective Recitation in Morocco," *Ethnomusicology Forum* 29, no. 2 (May 3, 2020): 166–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17411912.2020.1793683>.

¹¹ Lilik Umami Kaltsum et al., "Model Pembelajaran Tahfidz Al-Qur'an di Indoensia, Iran, Turki, dan Arab Saudi," *An-Nuba: Jurnal Kajian Islam, Pendidikan, Budaya, dan Sosial* 8, no. 2 (2021): 347–73.

¹² Fakhrudīn ar-Rāzī, *Mafāth al-Gaib*, vol. XX (Beirut: Dār Ihya' at-Turāṣ al-'Arabī, 1999), 271.

¹³ Jenny Berglund, "Secular Normativity and The Religification of Muslims in Swedish Public Schooling," *Oxford Review of Education* 43, no. 5 (September 3, 2017): 258, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2017.1352349>.

this study is to enrich the development of tafsir studies by shifting attention from exegetical and literary receptions toward oral and functional dimensions, thereby offering novelty in understanding how memorization practices negotiate meaning, identity, and authority in diverse Muslim communities.

Methods

Based on the primary sources studied in this study, this study can be classified as library research. The main objective of this study is an in-depth description and analysis as well as an attempt to categorize research findings that have been published in Scopus-indexed international journals. The analysis presented in this study uses qualitative analysis with an emphasis on aspects of previously published research findings.¹⁴ The research design chosen is a Systematic Literature Review,¹⁵ which allows the author to obtain appropriate research sources related to the phenomenon of Quranic memorizing in the 'Ajamic community. The 'Ajam community referred to in this paper is a Muslim community that does not use Arabic as its daily language.¹⁶

The search for relevant articles using the advanced search system on the Scopus website was then filtered using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol.¹⁷ The literature search strategy using the PRISMA protocol consists of three stages, namely identification, filtering, and data analysis. Each stage will be explained in the following section.

Identification Stage

This stage is the first stage in a systematic literature review. The search uses electronic devices and is focused on the Scopus database. To find articles that are relevant to the topic of study, several restrictions are made using certain keywords (Quran* AND Memorization* OR Memorization OR Preservation OR Hifz*, Quran* AND Learning OR School OR Pesantren OR Tradition, and Quran* AND Recitation OR Repeat OR Rehearsal OR Transmission), year limits (2013-2023), types of articles (Journal Articles), and also the language used (English).

Screening Stage

The second stage of the PRISMA protocol used is screening. The screening stage follows several steps: removing identical articles (duplicates), screening articles that do not provide complete abstracts and metadata, quick reading of titles and abstracts to find relevance to the research topic, access to full-text articles, and eligibility.

Articles that have been filtered through the stages of duplicate deletion, meta-data availability, quick reading of the title and abstract, and full-text access to the article are then read and filtered through the exclude and include criteria. Articles that are not selected as described in Table 2 are articles related to memorizing the Qur'an that do not directly describe the conditions of memorizing the Qur'an in the 'Ajamic community, do not explain the research method in detail, and are also conducted in Arabic-speaking Muslim communities such as in Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. In

¹⁴ Asep Saepudin Jahar et al., *Pedoman Penulisan Tesis Dan Disertasi Program Magister Dan Doktor* (Jakarta: Sekolah Pascasarjana Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, 2021), 10; Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2016), 6; Anselmus Je Toenlio, *Pendekatan Kualitatif bidang Pendidikan: Landasan, Teori, dan Panduan* (Malang: Ahliedia Press, 2021), 1–3.

¹⁵ Zulkifli, *Menyusun Tinjauan Pustaka: untuk Skripsi, Tesis, dan Disertasi serta sebagai Artikel Ilmiah* (Jakarta: Salemba Humanika, 2020), 16.

¹⁶ Rāḡib al-ʿAṣḡahānī, *Al-Mufradāt Fī Ḡarīb al-Qurʿān* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1991), 549.

¹⁷ Matthew J Page et al., "The PRISMA 2020 Statement: An Updated Guideline for Reporting Systematic Reviews," *BMJ*, March 29, 2021, 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>.

other words, the author only selects articles that are relevant in terms of discussion topics, research methods used, and research locations.

Analysis Stage

After going through the previous two stages, the author found nine relevant articles and analyzed them to answer the Research Question (hereinafter abbreviated as RQ). In this study, the author proposed five RQs that will be answered through the selected literature. The research questions proposed are as follows:

- RQ1 : What themes are studied by researchers related to aspects of Quranic memorizing in the 'Ajamic community?
- RQ2 : How is the method for Quranic memorizing applied?
- RQ3 : What are the supporting and inhibiting factors for Quranic memorizing?
- RQ4 : What is the impact of Quranic memorizing and the role of memorizers in the community?
- RQ5 : What are the motivations for Quranic memorizing explained in the research?

Result

In this section, the author presents the results of the systematic literature search, visualized through a PRISMA flow diagram and elaborated in a summary of the relevant articles. The PRISMA flow diagram provides a transparent overview of the identification, screening, and inclusion stages that ultimately reduced 1,830 initial records to nine eligible studies. Rather than reiterating the methodological procedures already outlined in the methods section, the results emphasize the substantive characteristics of the selected studies, thereby offering a clearer understanding of the research landscape on Qur'anic memorization within the 'Ajamic community.

The identification stage relied on carefully chosen keywords in the Scopus database, producing 1,830 records. After duplicate removal and metadata verification, the number was reduced to 1,624. The screening stage applied established eligibility criteria, focusing on the availability of abstracts, metadata completeness, and thematic relevance to Qur'anic memorization in non-Arabic speaking Muslim communities. This process narrowed the pool to 199 articles. Subsequent efforts to secure full-text access resulted in 134 articles available for detailed review. Finally, the inclusion stage applied stricter criteria, excluding studies conducted in Arabic-speaking contexts or those lacking methodological clarity. At the conclusion of this process, nine articles were deemed suitable for analysis.

Beyond the numerical reduction, the nine selected studies reveal important substantive features. Eight employed ethnographic fieldwork, reflecting a strong emphasis on lived experiences, cultural practices, and social contexts of Qur'anic memorization, while one adopted a narrative design that highlighted individual trajectories. The geographical distribution of these studies is noteworthy, spanning minority Muslim contexts such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, Sweden, and Hong Kong. This diversity underscores the global relevance of Qur'anic memorization practices among 'Ajamic communities and illustrates how these practices are negotiated in environments where Arabic is not the dominant language.

Thematically, the studies address memorization methods, the role of huffaz in community life, tensions between secular schooling and religious education, and motivational aspects such as religious devotion and communal identity. Taken together, these findings confirm the persistence of oral

traditions in Muslim communities and demonstrate the resilience of memorization practices despite structural challenges.

To provide a clearer picture of this rigorous selection process, the stages of identification, screening, and inclusion are summarized in Diagram 1, which presents the flow of records through the PRISMA protocol.

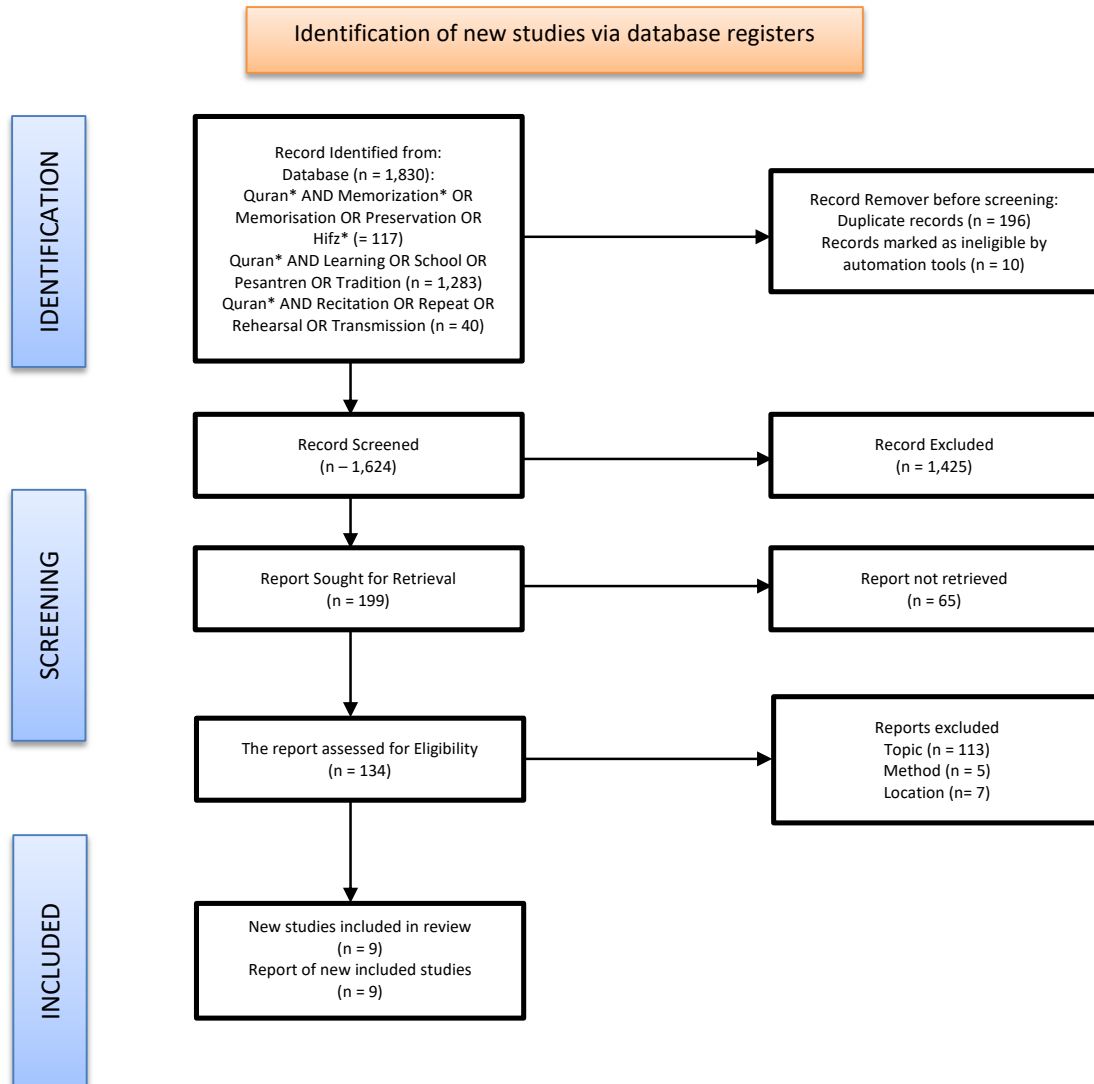


Diagram 1. Literature Search with PRISMA Protocol

In Diagram 1, the stages of the literature search using the PRISMA protocol are presented, consisting of identification, screening, and inclusion. The identification stage was conducted exclusively through the Scopus database, restricted to journal articles published between 2013 and 2023, written in English, and retrieved using three sets of keywords related to Qur'anic memorization, learning traditions, and recitation practices. This initial search yielded 1,830 records.

The screening stage applied established eligibility criteria rather than ad hoc procedures. Duplicates were removed systematically using Microsoft Excel, and records lacking abstracts or complete metadata were excluded. The remaining articles were then assessed for thematic relevance through titles and abstracts, reducing the pool to 199. At this point, full-text access was attempted,

resulting in 134 articles available for detailed review. Each of these articles was then evaluated against explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria: studies were included if they directly addressed Qur'anic memorization in non-Arabic-speaking ('Ajamic) communities, employed a clearly stated methodology, and were situated in appropriate research contexts. Conversely, studies were excluded if they focused on Arabic-speaking regions (e.g., Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia), lacked methodological clarity, or did not directly examine memorization practices.

The final inclusion stage yielded nine articles, representing less than one percent of the initial records. This strict selection highlights both the methodological rigor of the review and the limited number of studies that meet the precise criteria. While such a narrow outcome raises the possibility of excluding potentially relevant research, the process was guided by transparent eligibility standards designed to ensure that only studies with substantive relevance and methodological soundness were retained.

Taken together, these stages demonstrate how the large corpus of initial records was systematically refined into a small but highly relevant set of studies. To provide a clearer picture of this process, the flow of identification, screening, and inclusion is summarized in Diagram 1, which visually represents the progression from 1,830 records to nine eligible articles.

The nine articles in question are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Article Search Results

No	Title	Authors	Publication
1	Qur'anic school sermons as a site for sacred and second language socialization	Leslie C. Moore	Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, vol. 34 no. 5, (2013), p. 445-458
2	British Raj to China's Hong Kong: The rise of madrasas for ethnic Muslim youth	Wai-Yip Ho	Modern Asian Studies, vol 48 no. 2, (2014), p. 399-432
3	Islamic pedagogy and embodiment: an anthropological study of a British Madrasah	Glenn Hardaker dan Aishah Ahmad Sabki	International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, vol 28 no. 8, (2015), p. 873-886
4	The hidden Olympians: the role of huffaz in the English Muslim community	Bill Gent	Contemporary Islam, vol 10, no. 1 (2016), p. 17-34.
5	Continuity and change: Experiences of teaching religious education in the light of a life trajectory of hifz and secular education	Jenny Berglund	Religion and Education, vol 44 no. 1, (2017), vol 88-100
6	Secular normativity and the religification of Muslims in Swedish public schooling	Jenny Berglund	Oxford Review of Education, vol 43, no. 5 (2017), p. 524-535
7	Teaching Qur'an in Irish Muslim schools—curriculum,	Youcef Sai	British Journal of Religious Education, vol 40, no. 2, (2018), p. 148-157.

	approaches, perspectives and implications		
8	Memorization and learning in Sufi British madrasahs	Sabki, Aishah Ahmad Sabki dan Hardaker, Glenn	Journal for Multicultural Education, vol 13, no. 4 (2019), p. 302-319.
9	Qur'anic education and non-confessional RE: an intercultural perspective	Jenny Berglund dan Bill Gent	Intercultural Education, vol 30, no. 3 (2019), p. 323-334.

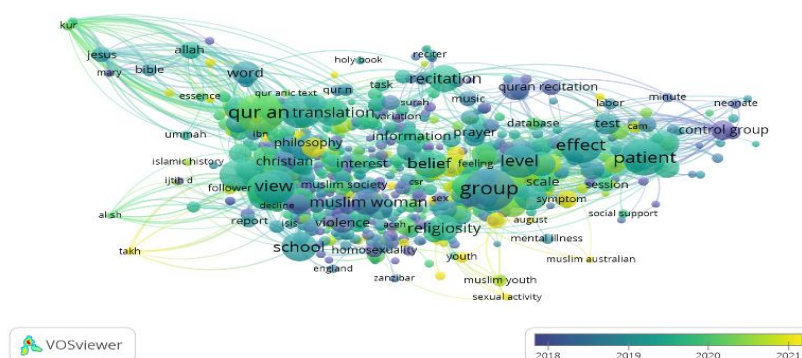
Table 1 above presents nine articles that are the result of screening and reading based on the eligibility criteria. All selected articles are field research; the majority of research designs used are ethnographic research designs found in eight articles, while one other article uses a narrative research design. In the next section, the author presents the results of the literature review and discussion with the results of other studies around the discussion topic, which is divided into five research questions.

Discussion

In this section, five sub-discussions will be presented by the five RQs proposed. Each discussion includes a study theme, memorization methods, supporting and inhibiting factors for memorization, the impact and role of memorizing the Qur'an in the 'Ajam community, and motivation for memorizing the Qur'an. Each sub-discussion will be explained as follows:

Themes of Study

The first aspect discussed in this article concerns the themes of study. These themes can be identified either through electronic tools or by directly examining the articles. To provide an overview, the author employed the VOS viewer application, which analyzes words appearing in titles, abstracts, and keywords. The visualization describes the relationship among keywords, showing the intensity of their co-occurrence through connecting lines. In this context, the author presents an Overlay Visualization, which highlights the novelty of research themes: bright colors indicate more recent studies, while darker colors represent older research. The results of this keyword analysis are presented in Figure 1.



In Figure 1, several words frequently appear in abstracts and titles. In total, seven clusters containing 683 keyword items were identified as commonly used by researchers. These results represent the initial dataset before filtering. After the screening process, the refined data are shown in Figure 2.

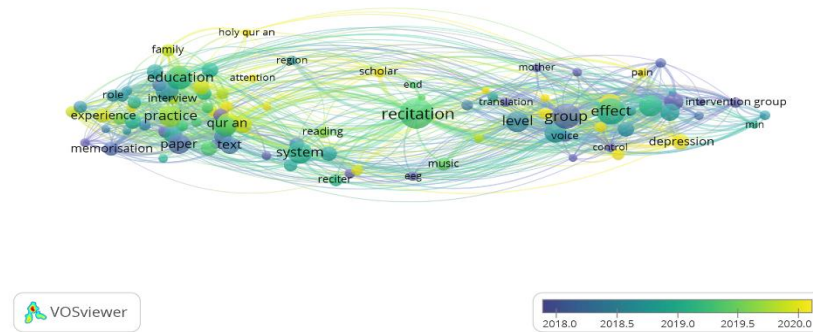


Figure 2. Themes of study based on screening results

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of keywords across 199 articles that passed the screening stage. Three clusters were identified, comprising 97 items. Bright colors indicate themes associated with recent research, while darker colors represent relatively older studies.

Based on the results of the study of the nine selected articles, the themes studied can be seen in Table 2:

Table 2: Themes of study of nine selected articles

Article	Method (Way, Time, and Place)	Inhibiting and Encouraging Factors	Impact and Role	Motivation
1	V	V	V	X
2	V	V	X	V
3	V	V	V	V
4	V	X	V	V
5	V	V	V	X
6	V	V	V	V
7	V	V	V	V
8	V	V	V	X
9	X	X	V	X

Note: (V) is included in the discussion, (X) is not discussed

Table 2 demonstrates the range of topics addressed by researchers. Most studies focus on memorization methods, including how memorization is conducted, the locations used, and the timing of activities. Only one article specifically examines strategies for maintaining memorization, which will be discussed further in the next section. Several studies also analyze the impact of memorization on individuals and the social roles of memorizers within their communities, alongside factors that either support or hinder the process. By contrast, motivational aspects appear less frequently, suggesting a potential gap for future research on why individuals in 'Ajamic communities choose to memorize the Qur'an.

In addition, this research can also be divided based on the location of the research. The distribution of research locations can be seen in the following diagram:

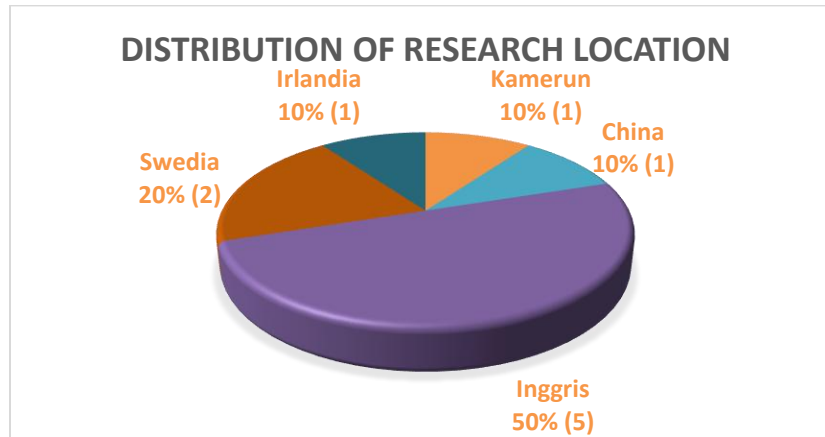


Diagram 2. Distribution of Research Locations

Most studies were conducted in England (four articles), while Sweden, Ireland, Cameroon, and China each accounted for one study. One article compared memorization practices in both England and Sweden. Notably, no studies were found in non-Arabic-speaking Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia or Malaysia. This absence highlights the need for future research exploring how Southeast Asian Muslim communities respond socially to Qur'anic memorization practices.

Memorizing Methods

In this section, several memorization methods described in the selected articles will be presented. In more detail, this section will explain how to memorize, when to memorize, and also where to memorize. In general, researchers do not present special methods for memorizing the Qur'an such as the *wahdah* method, *sabak*, or Jibril's method.¹⁸ The researchers explained more about the social aspects surrounding the tradition of memorizing the Qur'an.

In the memorization method section, the majority of researchers stated that memorizing the Qur'an is done by repeating the reading without being equipped with an understanding of the meaning of the memorized verses. This is as explained by Leslie C. Moore,¹⁹ Wai-Yip Ho,²⁰ Jenny Berglund,²¹ Glenn Hardaker, and Aishah Ahmad Sabki.²² Memorization without meaning is one of the memorization models that are often found in various 'Ajamic regions.²³ The main focus in learning to memorize is pronouncing words correctly without the slightest mistake by the applicable reading rules (*tajwid*). This is what is then widely rejected by the secular community in the West and even criticized

¹⁸ Ossman Nordin et al., "The Art of Quranic Memorization: A Meta-Analysis," *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 31, no. 2 (June 2, 2023): 794–95, <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.31.2.16>.

¹⁹ Leslie C. Moore, "Qur'anic School Sermons as a Site for Sacred and Second Language Socialisation," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 34, no. 5 (August 2013): 449, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2013.783036>.

²⁰ Wai-Yip Ho, "British Raj to China's Hong Kong: The Rise of Madrasas for Ethnic Muslim Youth," *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 2 (March 2014): 418, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X13000668>.

²¹ Jenny Berglund, "Continuity and Change: Experiences of Teaching Religious Education in the Light of a Life Trajectory of Hifz and Secular Education," *Religion & Education* 44, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15507394.2016.1267544>; Berglund, "Secular Normativity and The Religification of Muslims in Swedish Public Schooling," 258.

²² Glenn Hardaker and Aishah Ahmad Sabki, "Islamic Pedagogy and Embodiment: An Anthropological Study of a British Madrasah," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 28, no. 8 (September 14, 2015): 877, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2014.917738>.

²³ Nikhat Parveen, "Investigating the Memorization of the Quran Using the Grounded Theory Methodology," *The Qualitative Report* 26, no. 7 (July 16, 2021): 2227, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4752>.

as a form of learning that only relies on repetition, so the adage of learning with the "parrot" model or "parrot-fashion learning" emerged.²⁴

Different findings were presented by Youcef Sai, who studied the teaching of the Qur'an in Ireland, where students were taught the meaning, content, and stories related to the verses of the Qur'an that they would memorize.²⁵ Meanwhile, memorization using the repetition method in other studies is the first step to initiate students with the Qur'an. This step will be complemented by providing material related to the content of memorized verses²⁶ or complemented by internalizing the meaning through short lectures or *waaz'u* as routinely delivered by teachers in Cameroon.²⁷ At certain stages, memorizing the Qur'an is also carried out using writing, where students are asked to write down the verses they will memorize.²⁸

Another way that appears in the memorization method is the existence of cooperative efforts to listen to each other's memorization between every student.²⁹ The students also sometimes shake their bodies when memorizing.³⁰ This shows that in the early stages of memorization, students need full concentration so that memorization is not done simultaneously with other activities. This is different from the memorizers of the Qur'an who have smoothed their memorization. For them, repeating the memorization of the Qur'an can be done while carrying out other activities such as waiting for someone, being on a city bus, or riding a bicycle.³¹

In terms of memorization places, early memorization of the Qur'an is mostly done in traditional schools,³² madrasahs, or additional schools,³³ and special places for Qur'an education are provided, such as house-mosques (*bousques*), which are often found in Pakistani migrant communities in Hong Kong.³⁴ Memorizing the Qur'an can also be done at home by inviting a private teacher.³⁵ Unlike most areas with a Muslim majority, Qur'an education in various areas with a Muslim minority is not often found in public spaces such as mosques. This is also one of the inhibiting factors for memorization, as will be explained in the next section.

In terms of memorization time, several variations of time can be used for memorization. The majority of researchers say that memorizing the Qur'an for children is done in the afternoon. This is because in the morning students have to attend general education in public schools.³⁶ In some cases, memorizing the Qur'an can only be done in the evening after completing their daytime activities.³⁷ The opposite is true for memorizers who have completed memorizing the Qur'an; most of them use the morning (after the dawn prayer) to repeat the memorization of three chapters every day.³⁸ However, the feature that is almost found in all articles is that the initiation of memorizing the Qur'an

²⁴ Gent and Muhammad, "Memorising and Reciting a Text without Understanding Its Meaning," 3.

²⁵ Youcef Sai, "Teaching Qur'an in Irish Muslim Schools: Curriculum, Approaches, Perspectives and Implications," *British Journal of Religious Education* 40, no. 2 (May 4, 2018): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2016.1269723>.

²⁶ Berglund, "Secular Normativity and The Religification of Muslims in Swedish Public Schooling," 258.

²⁷ Moore, "Qur'anic School Sermons as a Site for Sacred and Second Language Socialisation," 447.

²⁸ Sai, "Teaching Qur'an in Irish Muslim Schools: Curriculum, Approaches, Perspectives and Implications," 8.

²⁹ Jenny Berglund and Bill Gent, "Qur'anic Education and Non-Confessional RE: An Intercultural Perspective," *Intercultural Education* 30, no. 3 (May 4, 2019): 304, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2018.1539305>.

³⁰ Sai, "Teaching Qur'an in Irish Muslim Schools: Curriculum, Approaches, Perspectives and Implications," 7.

³¹ Bill Gent, "The Hidden Olympians: The Role of Huffaz in the English Muslim Community," *Contemporary Islam* 10, no. 1 (January 2016): 27, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-014-0321-z>.

³² Moore, "Qur'anic School Sermons as a Site for Sacred and Second Language Socialisation," 455.

³³ Sai, "Teaching Qur'an in Irish Muslim Schools: Curriculum, Approaches, Perspectives and Implications," 2.

³⁴ Ho, "British Raj to China's Hong Kong," 414.

³⁵ Berglund, "Secular Normativity and The Religification of Muslims in Swedish Public Schooling," 257.

³⁶ Ho, "British Raj to China's Hong Kong," 417.

³⁷ Berglund, "Continuity and Change," 89.

³⁸ Gent, "The Hidden Olympians," 27–28.

has been introduced to children from an early age, even before they start elementary education and before they can write.³⁹

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Memorizing the Qur'an carried out by the 'Ajamic community certainly presents several conditions of obstacles and encouragement. Based on the analysis of the articles mentioned above, there are several factors inhibiting memorizing the Qur'an which are related to facilities, time, and social conditions.

The first inhibiting factor is facilities. Wai-Yip Ho explained that facilities for worship and religious education in Hong Kong are very minimal. According to him, there were only five official mosques in Hong Kong in 2012, so on average one mosque must be able to accommodate the worship needs of 18,000 Muslims in Hong Kong. Therefore, the lack of facilities for houses of worship is also a major obstacle to the implementation of representative teaching and memorization of the Qur'an.⁴⁰ The lack of Human Resources who can speak Arabic and English well is also an obstacle to teaching the Qur'an to children who do not yet understand Arabic.⁴¹

The second inhibiting aspect is the lack of time to study and memorize the Qur'an. Students have to attend formal school in the morning, which does not provide a curriculum for memorizing the Qur'an at all, so they are only able to attend lessons in the afternoon.⁴² Even if Al-Qur'an memorization subjects are included in some schools, the curriculum, is a local curriculum so there are only a few lesson hours.⁴³ This lack of memorization time is one of the main obstacles in the process of memorizing the Qur'an, which requires several repetitions and memorization maintenance, as is widely implemented in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.⁴⁴

The third inhibiting aspect is social conditions. The majority of secular society considers memorization to be an old-fashioned method of learning, a regression, and this is also exacerbated by the assumption that memorizers of the Qur'an are people who are too excessive in their religious attitudes⁴⁵. The role of the government is also involved in this, as explained by Berglund, that in 2014 there was criticism from Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) of religious schools in England that taught too many religious lessons and did not internalize British national values.⁴⁶ The existence of fear and negative labels of the Muslim community as part of the terrorist movement that gave birth to "Islamophobia" in the period 2002 to 2011 also contributed to social obstacles in the implementation of teaching the Qur'an.⁴⁷

In addition to several inhibiting factors, researchers also found supporting factors for memorizing the Qur'an. The problem of a lack of Arabic language skills is overcome by providing the meaning of the Qur'an at an advanced level, as explained by Leslie C. Moore through the use of *waazu* or short lectures in Cameroon. The *waazu* or lectures are delivered in two languages, namely Arabic

³⁹ Hardaker and Sabki, "Islamic Pedagogy and Embodiment," 879.

⁴⁰ Ho, "British Raj to China's Hong Kong," 411.

⁴¹ Moore, "Qur'anic School Sermons as a Site for Sacred and Second Language Socialisation," 454.

⁴² Berglund, "Secular Normativity and The Religification of Muslims in Swedish Public Schooling," 527.

⁴³ Berglund, "Continuity and Change," 92; Sai, "Teaching Qur'an in Irish Muslim Schools: Curriculum, Approaches, Perspectives and Implications," 4.

⁴⁴ Iwan Agus Supriono and Atik Rusdiani, "Implementasi Kegiatan Menghafal al-Qur'an Siswa di LPTQ Kabupaten Siak," *Jurnal Isema: Islamic Educational Management* 4, no. 1 (August 12, 2019): 58–62, <https://doi.org/10.15575/isema.v4i1.5281>.

⁴⁵ Berglund, "Secular Normativity and The Religification of Muslims in Swedish Public Schooling," 256.

⁴⁶ Berglund, "Continuity and Change," 92.

⁴⁷ Berglund, 93.

and Fulfulde (the local language of the Fulbe tribe in Cameroon), by quoting verses from the Qur'an and presenting their meaning and implementation in life.⁴⁸

The involvement of teachers is also very important in memorizing the Qur'an. In the Pakistani migrant community in Hong Kong, the limited Human Resources who master the local language and Arabic can be overcome by the presence of teachers and imams from Pakistan who have memorized the Qur'an and completed their master's education.⁴⁹ The role of teachers is also very large, as explained by Hardaker and Sabki, where teachers establish spiritual relationships with their students while also acting as the main transmitter in transmitting religious knowledge amid the culture of orality (orality) used in madrasas.⁵⁰

In contrast to the social factors of the secular community in the West that look down on the method of memorizing the Qur'an, the Muslim minority community in the West views the memorizers of the Qur'an with high regard.⁵¹ Bill Gent explained that the memorizers of the Qur'an receive high honor and responsibility in their community.⁵² Parents are happy if their children communicate with the memorizers of the Qur'an. The positive view of the Muslim community is indeed the opposite of the negative view of the secular community; on the one hand, this can be a source of pride for the memorizers of the Qur'an, but on the other hand, they do not dare to express their memorization openly to their peers or teachers, as experienced by Muslim students in Sweden.⁵³

This finding strengthens the research results of Vinni Sabrina, which states that one of the supporting factors for memorizing the Qur'an is the social community. In more detail, Sabrina revealed that eight factors influence the quality of memorization, namely sincerity of intention, strong determination, good memorization target planning, memorizing the Qur'an with the correct reading method, intensity of memorization repetition, motivation from the mentor, living in a Qur'anic environment, and using the correct method.⁵⁴ The environmental aspect is one of the important factors in supporting or inhibiting memorization of the Qur'an, as seen in Youcef Sai's article regarding the teaching of the Qur'an in Ireland.

Impact and Role of Memorizers of the Qur'an

Although memorizing the Qur'an is not fully appreciated by the secular community in the West, memorizers of the Qur'an feel the significant impact of the memorization habit in Qur'an schools. Among the benefits felt by memorizers of the Qur'an in the 'Ajamic community are increased language skills,⁵⁵ increased focus in studying the material, and also forming positive characters in students such as patience and respect for teachers both in Qur'an schools and in public schools.⁵⁶ In addition, memorizers of the Qur'an get a high position in society, which in the future can become capital that supports their future.⁵⁷

Studies related to the impact of memorizing the Qur'an for students are indeed not very dominantly conducted by researchers. This is because the research design chosen is an ethnographic research design that emphasizes the emic meaning aspect according to the experience of the

⁴⁸ Moore, "Qur'anic School Sermons as a Site for Sacred and Second Language Socialisation," 447.

⁴⁹ Ho, "British Raj to China's Hong Kong," 418.

⁵⁰ Hardaker and Sabki, "Islamic Pedagogy and Embodiment," 877, 882.

⁵¹ Sai, "Teaching Qur'an in Irish Muslim Schools: Curriculum, Approaches, Perspectives and Implications," 2.

⁵² Gent, "The Hidden Olympians," 23.

⁵³ Berglund, "Secular Normativity and The Religification of Muslims in Swedish Public Schooling," 524–25.

⁵⁴ Vinni Sabrina and Gifa Oktavia, "Eight Supporting Factors for Students' Success in Quran Memorization," *Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education* 6, no. 1 (2022): 93.

⁵⁵ Berglund, "Secular Normativity and The Religification of Muslims in Swedish Public Schooling," 527.

⁵⁶ Berglund and Gent, "Qur'anic Education and Non-Confessional RE," 5.

⁵⁷ Berglund, "Continuity and Change," 90.

informant. Several quantitative studies have been conducted by other researchers, which provide many interesting findings related to the impact of memorizing the Qur'an. Among the findings related to this is the strong relationship between memorizing the Qur'an and improving health, such as reducing the risk of hypertension, diabetes, and depression.⁵⁸

Regarding the role of Qur'an memorizers in the 'Ajam community, Bill Gent stated that Qur'an memorizers can play a role in any field as long as it is a halal job such as being a shopkeeper, dentist, teacher, and various other jobs. In short, memorizing the Qur'an does not prevent the hafiz from having a career in the community.⁵⁹ In particular, teachers are the dominant role and profession for Qur'an memorizers. This is as explained in the research of Wai-Yip Ho⁶⁰ and Jenny Berglund.⁶¹

The most dominant role of the hafiz occurs in the month of Ramadan. They will serve as imams who lead the implementation of tarawih prayers in the congregation. Every night one juz of the Qur'an will be read so that in thirty nights the entire Qur'an is finished being read. Some other hafiz will be tasked with correcting the imam's reading so that their prayer position is right behind the imam.⁶²

Motivation

Motivation is one of the important parts of memorizing the Qur'an.⁶³ Related to the motivational aspect, researchers found that religious motivation is the dominant factor in causing the tradition of memorizing the Qur'an to still develop in the 'Ajam community. For the Muslim Pakistani migrant community living in China, memorizing the Qur'an is an obligation that must be maintained even though they are not in a Muslim-majority community, even with the constraints of the lack of representative places to worship and read the Qur'an.⁶⁴

This can also be found in the tradition of memorizing the Qur'an in England. Madrasah students have a high motivation to memorize the Qur'an because by memorizing it, the values of the Qur'an will be internalized into the soul, and at the same time they have followed in the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who was the first to memorize the Qur'an.⁶⁵ Memorizing the Qur'an is also considered the main gateway to determining the direction of religious knowledge in the following phases.⁶⁶

In addition to these aspects, memorizing the Qur'an is also based on a functional reception of the Qur'an. Students in Ireland have a high motivation to memorize certain letters and verses for functional purposes. They memorize the Throne verse as a protection from disturbance and fear; they memorize short verses (some of Juz 29 and Juz 30) so that they can be read in prayer.⁶⁷ The same thing can also be found in Swedish students⁶⁸ and memorizers of the Qur'an in England.⁶⁹

⁵⁸ Nazmus Saquib et al., "Health Benefits of Qur'an Memorization for Older Men," *SAGE Open Medicine* 5 (December 2017): 6–7, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050312117740990>.

⁵⁹ Gent, "The Hidden Olympians," 15.

⁶⁰ Ho, "British Raj to China's Hong Kong," 417–18.

⁶¹ Berglund, "Continuity and Change," 89.

⁶² Gent, "The Hidden Olympians," 29.

⁶³ Eva Latifah, "Motives, Self-Regulation, and Spiritual Experiences of Hafizh (The Qur'an Memorizer) in Indonesia," *International Journal of Instruction* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 2022): 655–56, <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2022.15137a>.

⁶⁴ Ho, "British Raj to China's Hong Kong," 417.

⁶⁵ Hardaker and Sabki, "Islamic Pedagogy and Embodiment," 879.

⁶⁶ Hardaker and Sabki, 877.

⁶⁷ Sai, "Teaching Qur'an in Irish Muslim Schools: Curriculum, Approaches, Perspectives and Implications," 4–6.

⁶⁸ Berglund, "Secular Normativity and The Religification of Muslims in Swedish Public Schooling," 258.

⁶⁹ Gent, "The Hidden Olympians," 29.

This functional reception is one of the reasons why the focus of learning and memorizing the Qur'an is not accompanied by an understanding of the vocabulary or form of exegetical reception of the Qur'an. In line with Ahmad Rafiq's research, which emphasized that in non-Arabic-speaking communities, functional reception is the most common form of reception.⁷⁰ This is also in line with Kristina Nelson's findings which emphasize the oral aspect of the Qur'an rather than its literacy aspect. According to Nelson, the important position of the Qur'an in the Muslim community lies in its orality dimension so that the Qur'an can only be called such if it is read and listened to.⁷¹ The same view can be found in Frederick M. Denny's statement, which negates the importance of meaning in reading the Qur'an.⁷² This opinion is also strengthened by Anne K. Rasmussen's idea, which states that although the meaning of the Qur'an is something important for Muslims, the oral experience of the Qur'an (reading and listening) is more absorbed by Muslim communities who do not understand Arabic.⁷³

For the Muslim community, reading the Qur'an without understanding its meaning is a form of worship, as contained in one dimension of the definition of the Qur'an that the author has explained in the introduction of this article. The findings of the researchers confirm and support the definitions produced by the experts.

Conclusion

Memorizing the Qur'an is a tradition that lives and thrives in Muslim communities around the world. This tradition is not only carried out by Arabic-speaking Muslim communities but also by 'ajam Muslim communities. In this article, the author found nine articles that represent memorizing the Qur'an in various regions such as England, Sweden, Ireland, China, and Cameroon.

Judging from the specific theme studied, the majority of researchers studied memorization methods that involve the method, time, and place of memorization. The method used to memorize is to repeat the reading without knowing its meaning. However, there are different findings in the Irish Qur'an school, which adds an aspect of understanding the content of the verses of the Qur'an. In other areas, understanding the meaning is only given after the Qur'an can be memorized.

Memorizing the Qur'an faces several obstacles, namely the lack of public facilities for Muslims, lack of time to memorize, and negative perceptions from the secular community regarding memorizing the Qur'an. These inhibiting aspects cannot stop the enthusiasm of memorizing Muslims in the 'Ajami community because of supporting factors such as the noble position of memorizers of the Qur'an according to the views of the Muslim community, so that they present teachers of memorizing the Qur'an who have completed master's education, as done by the Pakistani Muslim migrant community in China.

Memorizing the Qur'an also has a direct impact on the development of students' studies in public schools. The majority of students feel that their habit of memorizing, repeating, and correcting this memorization increases focus, attention, and the ability to absorb and understand the material better. Teachers also confirm that memorizing the Qur'an can shape positive characters traits in students, such as increasing respect for knowledge and also for teachers.

⁷⁰ Ahmad Rafiq, "The Reception of the Qur'an in Indonesia: A Case Study of the Place of the Qur'an" (Dissertation, Philadelphia, Temple University, 2014), 156.

⁷¹ Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'an*, 188.

⁷² Frederick Mathewson Denny, "Qur'ān Recitation: A Tradition of Oral Performance and Transmission," *Oral Tradition* 4, no. 1–2 (1989): 14.

⁷³ Rasmussen, "The Quran in Indonesian Daily Life: The Public Project of Musical Oratory," 42.

Quran memorizers can also have careers and work in various halal public sectors. The majority of Quran memorizers work as educators or teachers, although they can still follow other fields of work. Memorizing the Quran does not limit their role because Quran memorizers can still repeat their memorization while riding public transportation, waiting, cycling, or they can take time in the morning after the dawn prayer to repeat the three juz of their memorization. The dominant role of Quran memorizers, especially in the UK, is increasingly felt during the month of Ramadan because they will serve as imams and correctors of readings in tarawih prayers with a target of reading one juz per night.

Memorizing the Qur'an is still found in various regions because of several motivations from the Muslim community. The main motivation for memorizing is religious. The majority of Muslims consider memorizing the Qur'an to be a must or obligation because they are required to read the Qur'an when performing the five daily prayers. They also want to imitate the journey of the Prophet Muhammad, who was the first to memorize the Qur'an and is even known as the walking Qur'an. The aspect of functional reception of the Qur'an is also mentioned by researchers as one of the motivations for memorizing the Qur'an.

On the one hand, the findings presented by the researchers reject the negative assumptions of secular researchers about the memorization method. The memorization method is widely perceived as a weak method, rote learning, and even associated with the parrot-fashion learning method. The findings of these researchers reject this assumption and show that memorizing the Qur'an involves many cognitive processes. On the other hand, these findings support the functional reception theory which states that the acceptance of the Qur'an as a holy book can be realized through the use, reading, and presentation of the Qur'an without the intention of explaining it in the context of a certain meaning (exegesis reception) as can be found in the research results of Frederick Denny, Kristina Nelson, Anne Rasmussen, and Ahmad Rafiq.

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