



Quranic Memorization Obstacles and Pedagogical Intervention Strategic among Students of *Tahfidz* Institution

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the challenges faced by female students from non-Islamic educational backgrounds in achieving Quranic memorization targets at Rumah Setia Putri Tahfidz Boarding School, Sukoharjo. The primary problem lies in the significant disparity in initial Quranic literacy, which hinders students from secular schools from meeting the standardized memorization pace of the institution. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the lived experiences and pedagogical adaptations of these students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation reviews involving students and tahfidz instructors. The gathered data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing to ensure interpretive validity. The findings indicate that students from non-Islamic backgrounds often struggle with basic recitation rules (*tajwid*), with some even requiring foundational instruction starting from the *lqra'* level. This lack of prior religious education causes a noticeable achievement gap compared to peers from Islamic elementary schools. However, intensive guidance through *tahsin* and *talaqqi* sessions has proven effective in helping these students bridge the competency gap. Furthermore, the implementation of personalized memorization targets allows students to progress according to their individual capacities without excessive psychological pressure. Internal obstacles such as laziness, perceived difficulty of memorization, and lack of focus remain prevalent challenges. Future research should investigate the long-term retention rates (*muraja'ah*) of students from secular backgrounds compared to those with formal religious foundations.

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Introduction

The pursuit of religious literacy, particularly through Quranic memorization, has become a significant sociocultural phenomenon in modern Muslim societies, serving as a cornerstone for character building and spiritual preservation (Kamri et al., 2024; Zuhdi, 2018). This research is crucial for the broader community because it addresses the growing demand for religious integration within a rapidly globalizing world where secular and sacred educational pathways often diverge. The importance lies in the fact that many families now seek to balance conventional academic excellence with spiritual mastery, yet the transition between these two distinct pedagogical worlds is rarely seamless. The condition is while the enthusiasm for enrolling children in *Tahfidz* program is skyrocketing, the psychological and cognitive readiness of students from non-religious backgrounds is often overlooked. Consequently, many students face burnout or academic stagnation, which can lead to a negative perception of religious education itself. Therefore, this study is essential to provide a framework for educational institutions to bridge the gap between conventional schooling and intensive religious curricula. In conclusion, understanding these dynamics ensures that the noble goal of Quranic preservation remains inclusive and attainable for students from diverse educational trajectories.

The problem facing by modern society is the intensifying "dualism" in education, where students are often forced to choose between competitive secular schooling and intensive religious training, creating a significant competency gap when they attempt to merge the two (Harsono & Hara, 2026; Sabic-El-Rayess, 2020). Many parents today enrol their children in *Tahfidz* boarding schools after years of conventional schooling, assuming that spiritual dedication alone can compensate for a lack of foundational religious education (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998; Bokayev et al., 2021). However, this transition frequently results in a "pedagogical shock" because the cognitive demands of rote memorization and *Tajwid* mastery are vastly different from the analytical and logic-based learning encountered in non-Islamic schools. This discrepancy often leads to a high rate of underachievement and emotional distress among students who find themselves academically "literate" in a secular sense but "illiterate" in a religious context (Adewale & Moyo, 2025; Hidayati et al., 2024). The societal pressure to achieve specific memorization targets without considering the learner's starting point creates a systemic barrier to success (Kim et al., 2025; Smith et al., 2020). This research stems from the urgent need to address this mismatch, ensuring that students from conventional backgrounds are not marginalized within the specialized environment of Islamic boarding schools due to their previous academic choices.

At the Rumah Setia Putri Tahfidz Boarding School in Sukoharjo, a striking phenomenon has emerged where students from non-Islamic schools struggle significantly more than their peers from *Madrasah* backgrounds. The condition reveals that these students often enter the program with a rudimentary or even non-existent ability to recognize Arabic script, necessitating a regression to basic

Iqra' levels while their peers advance to complex memorization. This creates a visible hierarchy of achievement that impacts the students' self-esteem and social integration within the dormitory. Many of these students exhibit "learning fatigue" early in the semester, as they must simultaneously master linguistic phonetics and the discipline of *Tahfidz* under strict deadlines. And the cultural shift from a relatively liberal conventional school environment to the disciplined, ritual-heavy life of the institution adds a layer of psychological burden. Teachers frequently report that while these students possess high initial motivation, their lack of "pre-requisite skills" leads to a plateau in progress. This reality highlights a critical disconnect between institutional expectations and the actual entry-level competencies of students arriving from the conventional educational sector.

Extensive research has documented the cognitive and pedagogical mechanisms of *Tahfidz*. Study by (Zulhannan & Musyarrofah, 2024) qualitatively demonstrated that rigorous Quranic memorization enhances cortical thickness and improves executive functions like inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility. Methodologically, (Sembiring et al., 2026) confirmed the unparalleled efficacy of the direct *Talaqqi* method in preserving phonetic precision and ensuring memorization retention. And (Dorin & Ferencz, 2026; Edidarmo & Fudhaili, 2023) established that intrinsic motivation and a strong, respectful teacher-mentor relationship are the most significant predictors of student success and well-being in Boarding school. However, a study by (Fandy, 2023) critically identified that these findings are predominantly derived from a homogenous cohort of students with early-life Islamic education, thereby overlooking the cognitive conflicts and socio-cultural transitions faced by the growing demographic of students from secular academic backgrounds, revealing a critical research gap.

This research contributes to the field by specifically isolating the "prior education" variable as a primary determinant of success in intensive religious settings, a nuance frequently missed in broader educational studies. While scholars have discussed the "what" and "how" of memorization, they have largely neglected the "who" in terms of academic genealogy. The weakness of prior research lies in its failure to provide a diagnostic tool or a differentiated pedagogical strategy for those starting from zero Arabic literacy in a high-pressure boarding environment. This study is vital because it addresses this gap by mapping the specific linguistic and psychological hurdles unique to students from non-Islamic schools. It moves beyond generalities to explore the structural and cultural barriers that prevent these students from reaching their full potential. Without this specific focus, *Tahfidz* institutions will continue to face high attrition rates among their most diverse student cohorts. Resolving this gap is essential for creating a more equitable religious education system that can accommodate the modern shift toward integrated learning, making it a critical frontier for contemporary Islamic educational research.

The research lies in its focus on the "pedagogical bridge" required to transition students from conventional, logic-heavy schooling to the discipline-heavy, traditional environment of *Tahfidz*. Unlike traditional studies that view Boarding school as isolated silos, this research positions the *Boarding school* as a

dynamic intersection where secular and religious educational identities collide (Kubro & Ali, 2021; Suyatno et al., 2022). This study is innovative because it applies a qualitative lens to the "clash of academic cultures," identifying the specific moments where conventional learning habits hinder or help the memorization process. The novelty also extends to the exploration of "context collapse" for these students, who must navigate a sudden shift in language, social norms, and cognitive expectations. It is imperative to complete this research now, as the trend of "returning to religious roots" among secularly educated families is at an all-time high. By establishing a clear understanding of these obstacles, we can move toward a "differentiated *Tahfidz* pedagogy" that respects the student's background while maintaining the integrity of the Quranic tradition. This research provides the missing link in modern Islamic education by advocating for a more inclusive, evidence-based approach to spiritual mastery.

The research focuses on identifying the specific structural, cognitive, and psychological obstacles that prevent students from non-Islamic backgrounds from achieving standardized memorization targets. This study argues that the achievement gap is not a result of a lack of piety or intelligence, but rather a lack of "foundational linguistic capital" and "pedagogical alignment." The preliminary argument posits that while intensive *Tahsin* and *Talaqqi* can mitigate these issues, the primary barrier remains the psychological pressure of "catch-up learning" in a competitive environment. This research contributes to the academic discourse by shifting the blame away from student "laziness" and pointing toward the need for institutional flexibility in setting individualized targets. By analyzing these barriers, the study provides a roadmap for *Tahfidz* schools to implement "transitional curriculums" that explicitly cater to students from conventional schools. Ultimately, the findings will empower educators to foster an environment where diverse academic backgrounds are viewed as a strength rather than a deficit. This contribution is essential for the sustainability of *Tahfidz* institutions in an era where the student body is increasingly heterogeneous and academically diverse.

Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to provide an in-depth and holistic exploration of the complex challenges faced by students from non-Islamic academic backgrounds. The selection of a case study is fundamentally grounded in its capacity to investigate a "contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context," particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the environment are not clearly evident (Marx, 2023; Tesar, 2021). By utilizing this design, the researcher can capture the nuanced experiences, focusing on the specific pedagogical and psychological barriers they encounter during the Quranic memorization process. The study is at the Rumah Setia Putri Tahfidz Boarding School in Sukoharjo, a location chosen purposively due to its unique student demographic which increasingly consists of graduates from conventional or secular schools. This setting provides a rich, concentrated environment for observing the transition and adaptation strategies implemented

by the institution (Foster, 2024). Furthermore, Sukoharjo's emerging status as a hub for *tahfidz* education makes this specific boarding school a representative and significant site for understanding the broader educational shift occurring within the region's religious landscape.

The data collection process integrates multiple qualitative techniques, including semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, and rigorous documentation reviews to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Leavy & Patricia, 2017; Thompson Burdine et al., 2021). Interviews were conducted with student, *tahfidz* instructors, and school administrators to triangulate perspectives on memorization obstacles, while field observations captured the daily dynamics of the *tahsin* and *talaqqi* sessions. To process this qualitative evidence, the study utilizes the interactive model of data analysis consisting of four distinct stages: data condensation, data display, data reduction, and conclusion drawing or verification. During data condensation, the researcher selects, focuses, and simplifies the raw data to identify core themes related to educational backgrounds and memorization targets. Data display involves organizing the information into narrative forms or matrices to facilitate a clear understanding of patterns. To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the researcher applies data triangulation and member checking, cross-verifying information across different sources and returning to the participants to confirm that the interpretations accurately reflect their lived realities and academic struggles.

Finding and Discussion

Finding

The Competency Gap and Multidimensional Barriers in Quranic Memorization

The competency gap is operationally defined as the structural and cognitive disparity in Quranic literacy between students from Islamic primary schools and those from conventional, non-Islamic academic backgrounds (Bauman & Lucy, 2021; Yuntina et al., 2025). This gap manifests as a significant lag in foundational skills, where students from secular schools often lack basic phonological awareness of Arabic script and *tajwid* elocution. The multidimensional barriers encompass not only this initial literacy deficit but also the subsequent psychological friction and socio-academic hurdles encountered during the transition into a high-pressure memorization environment. In this context, this is observed through the "remedial phase," where students must undergo basic linguistic training before they can even begin the actual task of memorization. Consequently, the achievement gap is not merely a matter of speed but a reflection of divergent academic genealogies that dictate the learner's readiness. Identifying these barriers is critical to understanding why some students experience profound "pedagogical shock" while others progress seamlessly, highlighting the need for a nuanced approach to student assessment and support within the boarding school's rigorous traditional framework.

Table 1. the multidimensional Barriers of Qur'anic Memorization

Interview Excerpt	Indicator	Informant
"I struggled at first because I never learned tajwid at my previous public school; I had to start from the <i>Iqra'</i> book again while others were already memorizing Juz 30."	Initial Literacy Gap (Remedial Phase)	Student A (Public School Background)
"The hardest part isn't the verses themselves, but the feeling that I am far behind. It makes me feel lazy and lose my focus because the targets feel impossible."	Internal Psychological Barrier (Perceived Difficulty)	Student B (Conventional Background)
"Students from non-Islamic schools often experience culture shock regarding our strict schedules, which directly impacts their cognitive focus and stamina for memorization."	External Socio-Academic Barrier (Culture Shock)	Teacher/Instructor H

The data presented in the table reveals a critical intersection between prior educational history and current academic performance, suggesting that the "starting line" for Quranic memorization is profoundly unequal. For students like Student A, the transition is marked by a humiliating "remedial phase" where they must engage in foundational literacy training that their peers bypassed years ago. This creates a visible hierarchy within the classroom, where the use of the *Iqra'* book by an adolescent student serves as a symbolic marker of their academic deficit. Critically, this disparity is not just a technical issue of reading speed; it is a structural barrier that delays the core objective of the boarding school, which is memorization. The discrepancy in initial competency forces the institution to manage two distinct learning tracks simultaneously, often without a formal curriculum for those in the "catch-up" phase. This initial friction sets the stage for a long-term achievement gap that is difficult to bridge without specific, differentiated pedagogical interventions tailored to those with secular backgrounds.

Then, the psychological implications of this gap, as highlighted by Student B, suggest that the competency deficit quickly transforms into a motivational crisis. When a student perceives the gap between their current ability and the institutional target as insurmountable, it triggers a "perceived difficulty" mechanism that manifests as laziness or a loss of focus. This is a classic case of cognitive overload where the student is forced to master phonetics and memorization simultaneously, leading to mental fatigue. The informant's struggle indicates that the lack of religious foundation acts as a "compounding stressor," where every technical difficulty in tajwid reinforces a sense of academic inadequacy. From a critical perspective, the institutional targets, if left unadjusted, become a source of psychological distress rather than a motivational tool. The data implies that the internal barriers are directly fed by the external reality of being "behind," creating a cycle of underachievement that is difficult for students

from conventional schools to break without external intervention and emotional support from the faculty.

The observational process confirms that during *talaqqi* sessions, students from non-Islamic backgrounds exhibit higher levels of anxiety and more frequent pronunciation errors compared to their peers. The researcher observed that while students from *Madrasah* backgrounds could memorize a page in approximately thirty minutes, those from conventional schools often spent the same duration merely trying to rectify the *makhraj* (articulation points) of a few verses. This observation strengthens the interpretation that the primary obstacle is the lack of "pre-requisite linguistic capital." The instructors were often seen spending double the amount of time with these students, yet the results remained disparate due to the sheer volume of foundational knowledge missing. The researcher noted that the "culture shock" mentioned by Informant H was visible in the students' body language—slumped shoulders and frequent distractions—suggesting that the rigid discipline of the boarding school exacerbates the exhaustion caused by their academic struggles. These field notes triangulate the interview data, confirming that the competency gap is a tangible, daily struggle that defines the educational experience of this specific student cohort.

And the research clearly identifies that the lack of prior Islamic education serves as the root cause of a multidimensional struggle at PPTQ Rumah Setia Putri. The data underscores a consistent pattern: students from conventional schools enter with a "literacy debt" that necessitates a time-consuming remedial process. This debt creates a domino effect, leading to psychological barriers such as diminished motivation and a heightened perception of task difficulty. Additionally, the external pressures of adapting to a disciplined boarding school environment act as an added layer of complexity that hinders their ability to close the competency gap. Essentially, the research findings point to a triple burden faced by these students—technical illiteracy, psychological demotivation, and socio-cultural maladjustment. This comprehensive data set illustrates that the achievement gap is a complex phenomenon that cannot be solved by simply increasing study hours; it requires a systemic acknowledgment of the students' diverse academic starting points and a reorganization of the support structures within the boarding school to accommodate these unique needs.

The description above reveals a clear "Disparity-Distress-Delay" trajectory for students from non-Islamic academic backgrounds. The first pattern is the "Disparity of Foundations," where the type of previous schooling dictates the immediate success or failure in the first semester. The second pattern is the "Psychological Feedback Loop," where the technical struggle with tajwid feeds into internal barriers like laziness and lack of focus, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure. The third pattern is the "Institutional Mismatch," where standardized targets clash with the varied capacities of a heterogeneous student body. These patterns indicate that the "Competency Gap" is not a static state but a dynamic process of struggle that evolves over time. Specifically, the data shows that without personalized targets, the external pressure of the boarding school environment serves to widen rather than close the gap. In conclusion, the findings

suggest that the successful memorization of the Quran in this context is heavily dependent on the synchronization of initial literacy, mental resilience, and institutional flexibility, all of which are currently skewed against students from conventional educational backgrounds.

Strategic Pedagogical Interventions and Socio-Environmental Support Systems

Strategic pedagogical interventions and socio-environmental support systems are defined as a synchronized framework of academic and social scaffolding designed to mitigate the initial competency gap of student from non-Islamic backgrounds (Du & Idris, 2025; Kansanen, 1991). This framework consists of two primary pillars: tailored instructional strategies, such as intensive *tahsin* and *talaqqi*, and a supportive ecosystem that leverages teacher-student relationships and peer dynamics. Unlike traditional, rigid memorization models, this approach emphasizes "pedagogical flexibility," where instructional loads are adjusted to fit the cognitive and emotional capacities of the learners. In the field, these interventions manifest as personalized learning targets that allow students to master basic phonological rules before progressing to complex memorization, thereby preventing psychological burnout. The socio-environmental support system further acts as a catalyst for resilience, transforming the boarding school from a high-pressure environment into a conducive greenhouse for spiritual and academic growth. Ultimately, this integrated system ensures that students from secular educational backgrounds can achieve significant developmental progress despite their lack of prior religious foundations.

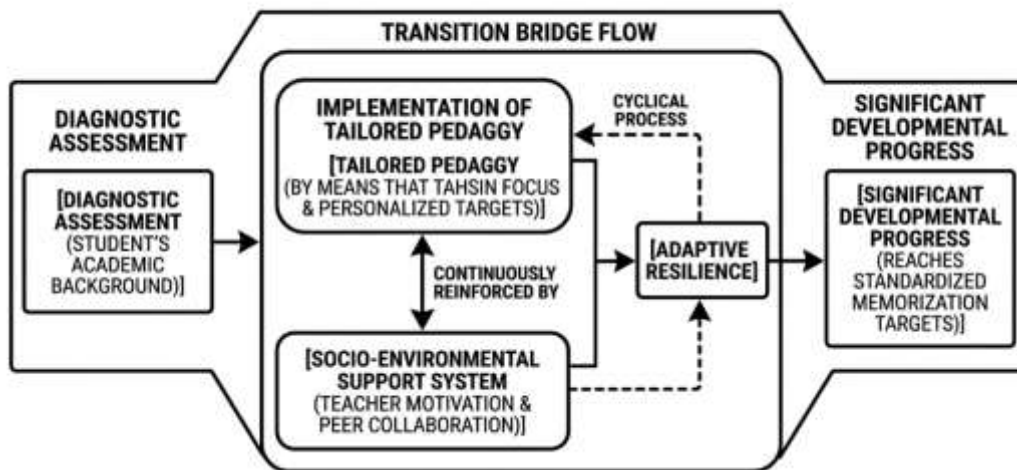
Regarding the implementation of tailored strategies, one informant, Student C, stated: "Initially, I felt overwhelmed, but the teacher allowed me to focus purely on my *tahsin* for the first two months without demanding new verses. This personalized target made me feel that my background was respected, and I didn't feel like a failure compared to my friends from Madrasah." The researcher interprets this statement as evidence of the critical role of "instructional differentiation." By decoupling foundational literacy from the pressure of memorization quotas, the institution effectively neutralizes the "achievement anxiety" that often plagues students from conventional schools. This strategy represents a shift from a content-centered to a student-centered approach, where the teacher acts as a diagnostic educator rather than a mere supervisor. The psychological relief reported by the informant suggests that institutional flexibility in the early stages of boarding life is the primary determinant for long-term retention and success for students entering with a "literacy debt."

On the social dimension, one teacher emphasized the importance of the ecosystem: "We don't just teach them how to read; we build a culture where those who are faster help those who are slower. Peer support is our greatest tool because when they see their friends from public schools also making progress, their motivation is reignited." This feedback indicates that the Supportive Ecosystem functions as a socio-emotional safety net. The researcher interprets this as Collaborative Resilience, where the burden of adaptation is shared among

the community rather than placed solely on the individual student. The teacher's role evolves into that of a motivational catalyst, ensuring that the competitive atmosphere of a *tahfidz* school remains healthy and inclusive. This data suggests that the external support system—comprising teacher motivation and peer collaboration—is what sustains the persistence of students when they face technical difficulties in their memorization, making the environment a proactive factor in their developmental success.

And the integration of these findings, the flow of the intervention begins with a diagnostic assessment of the student's academic background, followed by the implementation of tailored pedagogy by means that *tahsin* focus and personalized targets. This instructional phase is continuously reinforced by the Socio-Environmental Support System (teacher motivation and peer collaboration), which leads to adaptive resilience. Finally, this cyclical process results in significant developmental progress, where the student eventually reaches the standardized memorization targets. The researcher interprets this flow as a transition bridge model.

Figure 1. The Transition Bridge Model for Student Intervention Flow



It highlights that success for students from non-Islamic schools is not a linear climb but a managed process of stabilization. By prioritizing foundational mastery and emotional well-being before high-volume memorization, the institution successfully bridges the gap between the secular past and the religious future of the student. This flow proves that when pedagogical and social systems are synchronized, the initial obstacles are transformed into manageable steps toward mastery.

And the *talaqqi* sessions provide empirical weight to these findings. The researcher observed that the teachers consistently employed a "Scaffolding Technique," where they would simplify tajwid rules into digestible metaphors for students from conventional backgrounds, often spending extra time correcting articulatory phonetics in a supportive tone. In the dormitory area, the researcher noted the absence of "academic bullying"; instead, senior students were seen voluntarily tutoring their juniors from public schools in a relaxed, informal setting.

The researcher interprets these observations as the manifestation of a "Conducive Environment" that actively reduces the psychological cost of being a beginner. The physical and social layout of the boarding school, which minimizes external distractions and fosters communal ritual, allows these students to enter a state of "deep work" or focus that they rarely experienced in their previous academic lives. These observations confirm that the interventions are not merely theoretical but are embedded in the daily routines and social fabric of the institution.

The data indicates that the combination of personalized instructional targets and a robust social support system is the definitive solution to the competency gap. The research demonstrates that intensive *tahsin* and *talaqqi* act as the "Technical Bridge," while teacher motivation and peer support serve as the "Psychological Anchor." When these elements are integrated, students from non-Islamic backgrounds no longer view their history as a deficit but as a starting point for a unique developmental journey. The patterns emerging from the data show a clear shift from initial struggle to "Adaptive Success," characterized by increased confidence and a steady rise in memorization speed. Ultimately, the synthesis of these findings proves that the obstacles identified in the previous sub-theme are not insurmountable. Rather, they require a specialized pedagogical response that values individual progress over rigid standardization. The "evidence of significant development" found in this study serves as a successful model for how traditional *boarding schools* can adapt to the diverse educational realities of the modern era.

The description reveals a "Dual-Scaffolding" mechanism. The first pattern is Pedagogical Elasticity, where the curriculum stretches to accommodate the remedial needs of the learner, ensuring that no student is forced to memorize what they cannot yet read correctly. The second pattern is Social Cohesion, where the hierarchy of achievement is flattened by a culture of mutual assistance and teacher-led encouragement. The third pattern is Environmental Insulation, where the boarding school's discipline acts as a protective shell, allowing students to focus entirely on their transition without the social pressures of the secular world. These patterns suggest that the "Supportive Ecosystem" is not a passive backdrop but an active participant in the learning process. The data illustrates that the success of student from conventional schools is highly dependent on this "scaffolded transition." In conclusion, the study finds that while the literacy gap is real, it is the quality of the institutional intervention—both academic and social—that determines whether a student fails or flourishes in the noble pursuit of becoming a *Hafizah*.

Discussion

The finding regarding the initial literacy gap strongly aligns with the prior knowledge principle in educational psychology, which posits that a learner's starting point dictates their developmental trajectory. Compared to the studies by (Alshathri, 2025; Owan et al., 2022), which emphasize cognitive maturity as the primary factor in *tahfidz* success, this research identifies that technical linguistic foundations—specifically *tajwid* and phonetics—are far more decisive for students from conventional backgrounds. While existing literature often

generalizes the struggles of memorization as a purely motivational issue, this study highlights a specific "competency debt" that exists among secularly educated students (Little & McDaniel, 2015). This lack of foundational "Arabic Capital" creates a structural barrier that is not easily overcome by mere persistence. The alignment with previous research ends where those studies suggest that all students can catch up within one semester; our findings show that the literacy gap persists longer and requires a fundamental "remedial curriculum" that is currently under-theorized in traditional *boarding school* literature, marking a critical departure from more optimistic, generalized studies.

The effectiveness of *tahsin* and *talaqqi* as technical bridges in this study resonates with the classical pedagogical of Al-Zarnuji, yet it adds a modern dimension of instructional scaffolding (Ansari & Muhlis, 2026; Ilmah & El Yunusi, 2026). Previous literature, such as (Sembiring et al., 2026), focuses on the spiritual benefits of these methods, but this research highlights their functional role in mitigating pedagogical shock. This study finds a distinct difference from previous research that suggested students from public schools might struggle with traditional methods due to a preference for modern analytical learning; instead, the evidence shows that these students actually crave the high-frequency feedback provided by *talaqqi*. This creates a corrective mechanism that is more intense than what is typically described in broader Islamic education studies (Davis et al., 2021a, 2021b). The discrepancy between institutional speed and individual capacity observed here challenges the traditional "one-size-fits-all" model, suggesting that *tahsin* must be treated as a prerequisite rather than a parallel activity for students coming from the secular educational sector.

Regarding internal barriers, the perceived difficulty found in this study echoes the Self-Efficacy of Albert Bandura, particularly how it relates to the religious-academic identity of the student (Bandura, 2020). Previous studies often attribute laziness to a lack of spiritual discipline (Chi-Kin Lee, 2020; Fox et al., 2020). However, this research provides a more critical explanation: laziness is often a coping mechanism for cognitive overload (Aggarwal et al., 2025; Zhao et al., 2025). Unlike traditional literature that moralizes the student's failure, this research finds that the loss of focus is a direct result of the achievement gap between the student and her peers. This finding differs from mainstream religious educational discourse which often prioritizes spiritual intervention over pedagogical reform. By framing "laziness" as a symptom of a mismatch between prior education and current targets, this study shifts the discourse from a moral failing to a structural misalignment that requires an educational solution. This emphasizes the need for *tahfidz* institutions to adopt psychological screening alongside academic testing.

The role of the supportive ecosystem and teacher motivation confirms the findings of many studies on the total institution nature of *boarding school*. However, this study adds a specific layer regarding the social scaffolding required for secular-to-religious transitions (Arifin & El-Yunusi, 2026). While existing literature often praises the discipline of boarding schools as a catalyst for success, this research reveals that for students from conventional backgrounds, the "Peer Support" system is the primary factor that prevents social comparison stress from

turning into academic withdrawal. Previous researchers have argued that the communal environment of a *boarding school* acts as a safety net, and our findings validate this, specifically showing that senior students acting as tutors can flatten the hierarchy of achievement. This aligns with the Social Learning Theory but contextualizes it within a high-stakes spiritual environment (Bandura, 1989). The intensity of the schedule acts as an unintended exclusionary mechanism unless it is balanced by the emotional warmth of the instructors.

The synthesis of these comparisons suggests that while the "what" of the obstacles is well-documented, the "how" of the intervention remains misunderstood in literature. Most studies fail to isolate the "secular school background" as a distinct demographic variable with unique pedagogical needs. This research proves that "prior academic capital" creates a lingering privilege that secular students must work twice as hard to overcome. This highlights a significant gap in current educational theories regarding religious institutions, which often overlook how previous secular schooling shapes a student's cognitive toolkit. In contrast to studies that suggest *tahfidz* is an egalitarian pursuit where only effort matters, this research demonstrates that institutional flexibility is the true variable of success. By highlighting these differences, this study calls for a revision of the Standard *Tahfidz* Model to better accommodate the increasing number of students entering from non-traditional academic pathways, ensuring that the pursuit of the Quran remains inclusive.

The implications of this research are profound, as it demands a re-evaluation of the Tabula Rasa assumption in religious education. Theories of *tahfidz* must now account for pedagogical genealogy, acknowledging that a student's previous academic history is a permanent lens through which they process religious curricula (Khilmiyaha & Suudb, 2020). Theoretically, this study suggests that religious literacy should not be treated as a binary but as a "Linguistic Spectrum" influenced by secular education habits. This provides a new framework for researchers to study "Integrated Education" by focusing on the cognitive friction that occurs during the transition between two disparate systems. It challenges the spiritual determinism often found in Islamic educational theory by reintroducing cognitive pre-requisites as a critical variable (Mudana et al., 2025; Wahid, 2025). This study thus contributes a more empirical, psychological dimension to the traditionally theological discourse of Quranic memorization, encouraging a more holistic approach to how we understand the "hafiz" brain and its development within a modern sociocultural context.

From the other perspective, these findings provide a clear mandate for *tahfidz* institutions to move away from standardized targets toward differentiated instruction. The practical implication for the institution is the urgent need for a bridging program specifically designed for students from non-Islamic backgrounds. Practically, this means the first semester should focus exclusively on *tahsin* and linguistic phonetics rather than forcing immediate memorization quotas (Mystakidis et al., 2021; Pathollah, 2023). By decoupling literacy from memorization in the early stages, schools can prevent the burnout and motivational collapse identified in the research. Educators must be trained to

recognize the "symptoms of pedagogical shock" as academic needs rather than behavioural issues or a lack of piety. This shift in practice would allow for a more inclusive environment where students from diverse backgrounds can succeed without the psychological trauma of being constantly behind. Such reforms would ultimately increase the retention rates and the psychological well-being of the *student* in the long term.

Then, the practical implication involves the psychology of peer support and the role of the *teacher* as a cognitive bridge. The research suggests that instructors must adopt a counseling-based pedagogy when dealing with students from conventional schools, acknowledging the emotional weight of their academic struggles. Practically, institutions should implement a Buddy System that pairs students from different backgrounds with a focus on cooperative rather than competitive learning. This would mitigate the social comparison stress found in the findings and foster a sense of shared belonging. Furthermore, the establishment of "Personalized Progress Trackers" that reward effort and foundation-building, rather than just the number of pages memorized, would help sustain long-term motivation. This practical shift would transform the *boarding school* from a high-pressure furnace into a supportive greenhouse for students starting from zero. These adjustments are not just accommodation but essential reforms for the sustainability of *tahfidz* institutions in an increasingly diverse educational landscape.

The theoretical framework developed here regarding contextual adaptability suggests that *tahfidz* success is a product of systemic synchronization. This implies that the institution, the student, and the previous educational background must be viewed as an interconnected ecosystem. Theoretically, this research moves the field toward a socio-pedagogical model of *tahfidz*, which integrates sociolinguistics, cognitive psychology, and traditional Islamic pedagogy. This model suggests that the obstacles are not inherent to the Quran or the student, but are products of the interaction between the two. This theoretical shift allows for more nuanced future research into how secular logical framing might actually be used as a strength in memorization if properly harnessed. It opens the door for cognitive mapping studies that could explore how students with strong secular backgrounds might utilize their analytical skills to organize and retain complex verse structures, turning a perceived barrier into a potential advantage if the pedagogy is correctly adjusted.

Conclusion

This research reveals the achievement gap in Quranic memorization is not a product of spiritual deficiency but is fundamentally rooted in a "literacy debt" and "pedagogical shock" experienced by students from non-Islamic academic backgrounds. The profound lesson derived from this study is that religious education must transcend its traditional "one-size-fits-all" approach to embrace a more empathetic, differentiated pedagogy that recognizes the diverse academic genealogies of modern learners. The strength and scholarly contribution of this

article lie in its critical isolation of "prior education" as a primary determinant of *tahfidz* success, providing a rare empirical bridge between secular educational psychology and traditional Islamic instructional design. While this study offers deep qualitative insights into the female student experience, it is limited by its single-site focus and relatively short observation period. Future research should undertake longitudinal studies to track the long-term retention (*muraja'ah*) of these students and expand the scope to include a comparative analysis of male students and diverse institutional models across different regions.

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