

OPTIMIZATION OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CULTIVATING THE QUR'ANIC GENERATION THROUGH ROUTINE QUR'AN RECIPIENT ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN IN BANGUN SARI VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study describes the implementation and impact of regular Quran recitation activities for children in optimizing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to foster a Qur'anic generation in Bangun Sari Village, Setia Janji District, Asahan Regency. The activity was carried out through the Thematic Community Service Program of the University of Muhammadiyah North Sumatra in September 2025, involving children, parents, community leaders, and students. This study applied a descriptive qualitative method, where information was collected through observation, interviews, and document searches. All information was then processed narratively to describe the process and findings that emerged. The results showed that the recitation activities went well and received community support. The program focused on tahsin, tahfidz, and the formation of religious character traits such as discipline and responsibility. Approximately 75% of participants experienced an improvement in their ability to read the Qur'an and memorize short surahs. In addition to strengthening religious values, this activity also fostered a spirit of community among the community, and for students, this program became a valuable experience in applying their knowledge and fostering social empathy.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, Regular Quran Recitation, Qur'anic Generation, Bangun Sari Village

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) functions as the foundational cornerstone in forming personality, moral integrity, and ethical values in the younger generation. Through structured religious instruction, every individual is guided to cultivate robust faith, spiritual intelligence, and noble character in accordance with Islamic teachings. As synthesised in classical and contemporary theological frameworks, human existence is intrinsically bound to faith, which serves

simultaneously as the bedrock of worldview and the primary catalyst for righteous deeds (Shihab, 2012). In the modern era—characterised by rampant digital transformation, rapid technological acceleration, and hyper-competitive socio-cultural shifts religious faith operates as a crucial moral and spiritual filter. It prevents the youth from succumbing to the secularising, atomising, and destabilising pressures of globalisation. Contemporary empirical research reinforces this imperative, demonstrating that young people in modern society urgently require religious grounding because the contemporary landscape presents virtually limitless exposures where no external mechanisms can substitute for inner faith as a primary ethical filter (Sopiani et al., 2022). Only through an unshakeable conviction in Allah SWT can individuals discern between righteous conduct and transgressive behaviour. Consequently, the depth and authenticity of an individual's faith serve as the definitive benchmark for evaluating personal character, encompassing internal conviction, speech, and overt social behaviour. Furthermore, systematic character development in religious education requires continuous alignment between educational objectives and social ecosystems to maintain moral consistency (Alam & Sirozi, 2024).

The ideal modern Muslim youth must not only embody deep spiritual conviction but must also possess advanced intellectual capacity and cognitive rigour. Standard lexicography defines intellectuality as the capacity for clear, systematic, and science-grounded critical thinking. In educational psychology and Islamic pedagogy, intelligence represents an innate, multi-dimensional capacity enabling individuals to act purposefully, think rationally, and interact effectively with complex abstract, mathematical, and linguistic structures (Shaleh, 2004). Within this theoretical paradigm, the "Qur'anic Generation" is conceptualised not merely as a group with localised spiritual piety, but as a cohort possessing critical analytical skills and scientific competence necessary to comprehend, internalise, and operationalise Islamic principles within daily socio-cultural realities.

The imperative of systematic religious nurturing within Islamic Religious Education is paramount for instilling character traits that align seamlessly with Qur'anic principles. Educational methodology defines structured guidance as an intentional, systematic, and efficient organisational effort designed to maximise developmental outcomes (Depdiknas, 1990, as cited in Sopiani et al., 2022). Furthermore, establishing continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is essential to assess learning competence and communication administration, thereby ensuring that structured educational interventions yield optimal operational outcomes (Hermawan & Sari, 2023). Systematic religious guidance aims to cultivate a balanced, harmonious religious life while progressively elevating spiritual devotion and God-consciousness. Through well-structured

educational intervention, Muslim youth acquire the spiritual awareness and moral resilience required to maintain equilibrium between their vertical relationship with the Creator and their horizontal societal relationships.

A primary, highly effective operationalisation of religious guidance is regular Qur'an recitation activities tailored for children. Far beyond elementary reading instruction, routine Qur'anic recitation functions as a core instrument for early childhood character formation and value internalisation. The Holy Qur'an is the foundational source of Islamic doctrine, housing not only transcendental truths but also actionable frameworks for human morality and governance. Consequently, acquiring Qur'anic literacy and comprehension constitutes a fundamental religious obligation for every Muslim. Pedagogical discourse establishes that Qur'anic education represents a top-tier educational priority that must be provided to every individual for personal spiritual well-being, family stability, and broader societal harmony. Through structured recitation circles, children do not merely practice phonetic articulation or memorisation; they engage in a transformative process of absorbing divine guidance and projecting it into daily ethical behaviour.

Despite the recognised importance of Qur'anic pedagogy, empirical observations in various rural communities, including Bangun Sari Village, Setia Janji District, Asahan Regency, reveal a concerning trend where children's engagement in community-based religious activities remains relatively low. Children's time is increasingly consumed by rigid formal school schedules, extracurricular routines, and ubiquitous digital entertainment. Consequently, foundational skills in reading the Qur'an with proper tajwid (phonetic rules) and comprehending its contextual meanings remain underdeveloped. This structural challenge impedes the development of a genuine Qur'anic generation capable of embodying Qur'anic ideals in daily life.

To address this structural gap, the Student Community Service (KKN) program offers a powerful institutional mechanism bridging higher education institutions with rural communities. The KKN initiative embodies the university's Tri Dharma principles integrating higher education, scientific research, and community service as mandated by Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (Indonesia, 2006). Within this framework, university students act not merely as passive transmitters of academic knowledge, but as active catalysts for social transformation and community empowerment. Aligning with sociological theories of social action and agency, university student involvement in addressing localised societal challenges transcends superficial charity; it creates an immersive experiential learning environment that sharpens critical thinking, fosters social empathy, and drives community-led innovation (Ritzer, 2004).

The Thematic KKN Program implemented by the University of Muhammadiyah North Sumatra in Bangun Sari Village, themed "Optimisation of Islamic Religious Education in Cultivating The Qur'anic Generation Through Routine Qur'an Recitation Activities for Children in Bangun Sari Village," represents a concrete operationalisation of community engagement rooted in religious pedagogy. The intervention systematically focuses on child development through dedicated tahsin (recitation refinement) and tahfidz (memorisation of short surahs) modules. In this setup, university students function as pedagogical facilitators and motivational mentors, creating structured routines that cultivate discipline, religious devotion, and deep affection for the Qur'an. This multi-dimensional approach reinforces PAI implementation across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, aimed at shaping holistic individuals who possess knowledge, faith, and noble character. Furthermore, regular Qur'an recitation in Bangun Sari Village serves as a vital social catalyst, strengthening community cohesion and revitalising the family's role as the primary centre for religious upbringing. Supported by local religious leaders, parents, and university students, the initiative builds a sustainable environment for continuous religious character formation. As emphasised in Islamic ethics, human actions must be teleologically oriented toward producing benefit (*maslahah*) and averting harm (*mafsadah*) (Shihab, 2012); thus, routine recitation is not a static ritual, but a dynamic socio-spiritual endeavour designed to nurture an ethically grounded Qur'anic generation.

Given this contextual backdrop, this study aims to systematically analyse and elucidate how the optimisation of Islamic Religious Education through routine Qur'an recitation activities contributes to fostering a Qur'anic generation in Bangun Sari Village. Additionally, this research seeks to identify empirical obstacles encountered during program execution and evaluate the strategic measures implemented to ensure the long-term sustainability of religious mentorship within the local community.

METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative methodology to rigorously analyse the real-world implementation and socio-pedagogical impact of routine Qur'an recitation activities aimed at optimising Islamic Religious Education and fostering a Qur'anic generation in Bangun Sari Village, Setia Janji District, Asahan Regency. A qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate because the researchers were directly immersed in the field during the Thematic Community Service Program (KKN) conducted by the University of Muhammadiyah North Sumatra in 2025, allowing authentic observation of instructional dynamics, interpersonal interactions between children and community members, and

measurable improvements in children's Qur'anic reading fluency, memorisation, and comprehension.

The field research was conducted over 13 days in September 2025 across several hamlets within Bangun Sari Village. The core program intervention focused on structured children's learning sessions emphasising tahsin (articulation and tajwid correction), tahfidz (memorisation of short surahs from Juz Amma), and foundational Islamic moral guidance. Additionally, KKN students actively participated in local women's religious gatherings, communal mosque maintenance, and broad socio-religious events, ensuring a holistic, community-integrated approach to service and data collection.

The primary research subjects consisted of child participants enrolled in the routine recitation program. Data sources comprised primary and secondary data. Primary data were gathered through structured field observations, participatory interactions, focus group discussions, and meticulous field documentation. Secondary data were derived from KKN official activity logs, village demographic records, and relevant scholarly literature on Islamic education and character formation. Collected qualitative data were analysed iteratively using descriptive qualitative procedures including data condensation, thematic categorisation, narrative display, and drawing verified conclusions to accurately capture how routine recitation instils religious values, personal discipline, and Qur'anic engagement. To establish rigorous academic trustworthiness and analytical validity, source and method triangulation were systematically applied by cross-verifying findings across direct observations, participant interviews, and documentary records.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Implementation and Impact of Routine Qur'an Recitation in Bangun Sari Village

Implementation and Impact of Routine Qur'an Recitation in Bangun Sari Village. The thematic initiative entitled "Optimization of Islamic Religious Education in Cultivating The Qur'anic Generation Through Routine Qur'an Recitation Activities for Children in Bangun Sari Village" was executed successfully, yielding substantial educational and social benefits for the local populace. Conducted over 13 days in Bangun Sari Village, Setia Janji District, Asahan Regency, North Sumatra Province, as part of the 2025 Thematic Community Service Program (KKN) by the University of Muhammadiyah North Sumatra, the intervention was delivered entirely through face-to-face engagements involving children, adolescents, parents, and community leaders. Prior to field execution, university students performed comprehensive baseline

surveys, coordinated closely with village administration, and secured formal permissions to establish a seamless framework for program operations.

Initial baseline observations revealed significant pedagogical deficits regarding children's Qur'anic literacy in Bangun Sari Village. Approximately 60% of children aged 7–12 years were struggling with foundational hijaiyah letter identification and lacked understanding of elementary tajwid rules, while the remaining 40% possessed basic reading mechanics but exhibited minimal understanding of the foundational meanings of the verses recited. These initial metrics highlighted an urgent need for targeted, structured educational intervention in basic Qur'anic literacy. Consequently, daily recitation sessions were formulated as the primary intervention, supported by auxiliary community activities including mothers' religious circles, mosque sanitation drives, community health sessions, and micro-business support for local SMEs. These activities were enthusiastically embraced by the community.

The core intervention daily late-afternoon Qur'an recitation—was centred in Hamlet IV and progressively expanded to neighbouring hamlets. The curriculum integrated three complementary dimensions: tahsin (phonetic precision and tajwid refinement), tahfidz (systematic memorisation of short surahs), and tafhim (basic contextual translation and explanation). Instruction progressed incrementally, beginning with letter recognition and articulation drills, advancing through tajwid applications, and culminating in the structured memorisation of essential surahs such as Al-Fatihah, Al-Ikhlās, Al-Falaq, and An-Nas. Learning sessions commenced with collective prayers, followed by active review (*murojaah*) of previously memorised verses, before transitioning into core instructional modules. Instructors employed active, participatory teaching methods, encouraging children to articulate, repeat, and internalise core lessons. Integrating interactive pedagogical tools and instructional media into these recitation circles effectively bridged traditional memorisation techniques with modern cognitive learning preferences (Patriasih et al., 2025).

University students acted not merely as instructors, but as dynamic pedagogical mentors. To cultivate an engaging, highly participatory learning environment, students introduced creative educational tools, including interactive Islamic learning games, memorisation quizzes, and merit-based recognition for student progress. Understanding the psychological foundations of child development enabled these student mentors to adapt instructional techniques to match the cognitive and affective growth stages of young learners (Haryono et al., 2024). This strategy dramatically increased student engagement: daily attendance expanded from an initial cohort of 18 children in the first week to over 35 active participants by the second week. Sessions ran

daily from 16:00 until near Maghrib prayer, with each session spanning 60 to 90 minutes.

Alongside the main educational sessions, students facilitated auxiliary community programs, including adult women's study groups, mosque cleaning campaigns, community fitness activities, and values-based micro-entrepreneurship guidance aimed at supporting family economies. Managing these multifaceted educational and community activities through structured organisational planning ensured their continuous operational efficacy across the village (Madihah & Cahyanto, 2024). Community support was exceptional; residents voluntarily supplied learning spaces, woven mats, Qur'an copies, and study supplies. Active endorsements from local religious authorities and village administrators proved instrumental in maintaining program momentum. Most importantly, parental enthusiasm was a primary catalyst for success, as parents actively encouraged daily attendance, monitored home practice, and ensured their children arrived punctually.

Despite these successes, implementation encountered several field challenges, including limited instructional materials, physical distances between homes and learning venues, and fluctuating student motivation driven by digital entertainment distractions. Overcoming these hurdles required well-planned instructional strategies that sustained children's intrinsic learning motivation and attendance consistency (Susanti, 2020). To mitigate these obstacles, students deployed personalised social approaches, conducting home visits, offering individualised encouragement, and introducing varied instructional formats to prevent monotony. Students also implemented small-group instruction to optimise teacher-to-student ratios and ensure individual attention. Furthermore, targeted parental briefings emphasised the critical role of home-based educational reinforcement. These combined measures substantially improved student discipline, elevated learning enthusiasm, and secured sustained community participation.

From an experiential learning standpoint, the program provided university students with profound empirical insights into rural socio-cultural dynamics. Participating students enhanced their interpersonal communication, leadership capabilities, social empathy, and civic responsibility. The program exemplified the real-world application of the university Tri Dharma principles, allowing students to translate academic concepts into actionable solutions for rural community needs, particularly within religious instruction and moral character building.

Theoretical analysis indicates that the implementation of routine Qur'an recitation strongly aligns with M. Quraish Shihab's conceptualisation of

righteous deeds, defined as constructive actions that maximise social and spiritual good while systematically mitigating societal decay (Shihab, 2012). Within this instructional framework, children were guided not only in technical recitation but also in internalising Islamic ethical conduct, such as personal discipline, accountability, respectfulness, and communal solidarity. Establishing systematic evaluation processes during these sessions allowed mentors to measure skill retention accurately and continuously refine learning strategies for optimal output (Baharuddin, 2023). Enhanced discipline was visibly reflected in improved punctuality, active participation in maintaining mosque cleanliness, and collaborative peer learning. Post-intervention evaluations demonstrated marked positive transformations: children exhibited higher reading fluency, superior behavioural discipline, and greater respect toward elders and peers. Local religious instructors and community leaders reported that the program greatly elevated public awareness regarding the necessity of early religious education. These outcomes corroborate standard educational principles asserting that structured guidance systematically enhances existing competencies through targeted intervention (Depdiknas, 1990, as cited in Karmiza, 2019).

Furthermore, viewed through sociological frameworks of agency and social change, student participants successfully operated as strategic "agents of change," driving constructive social transformation through spiritual and educational empowerment in a rural setting (Ritzer, 2004). Moreover, long-term character education within rural environments requires active synergy between institutional leadership and community networks to ensure sustainable moral transformation (Hasibuan et al., 2024). Quantitative and qualitative feedback from local teachers and parents confirmed substantial skill acquisition among participants. Approximately 75% of participating children demonstrated measurable improvements in tajwid accuracy and reading fluency, while 50% successfully memorised a minimum of three short surahs during the 13 days. Beyond technical literacy, children integrated naturally into communal religious life, regularly attending congregational prayers and post-Maghrib Qur'an readings. These behavioural shifts serve as tangible indicators of successful religious character building.

The initiative provided a mutually beneficial ecosystem for both the target community and university students. Students gained invaluable field experience, deepening their contextual understanding of rural social structures while honing project management, empathetic communication, and leadership capabilities within community-based educational models. This outcome perfectly reflects the mandate of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education

System, which tasks higher education institutions with fulfilling the Tri Dharma through meaningful social contribution (Tambun et al., 2020). Ultimately, routine Qur'an recitation proved to be an exceptionally effective platform for elevating children's Qur'anic literacy and moral character, demonstrating how higher education community service can successfully revitalize grass-roots religious education.

CONCLUSION

The educational initiative "Optimization of Islamic Religious Education in Cultivating The Qur'anic Generation Through Routine Qur'an Recitation Activities for Children in Bangun Sari Village" was executed successfully and produced a transformative impact on the local community. The program significantly enhanced children's Qur'anic reading mechanics, tajwid accuracy, memorisation capacity, and comprehension, while simultaneously instilling essential religious values such as personal discipline, social responsibility, and moral etiquette. Approximately 75% of child participants achieved verified improvements in reading fluency and successfully memorised several short surahs. The program's success was driven by strong student enthusiasm, parental backing, and vibrant community involvement. In addition to individual educational gains, the initiative strengthened local social cohesion through collaborative community projects and shared religious events. For university students, the project offered an essential platform for translating academic theory into practical service, developing leadership capabilities, and building social empathy. Overall, the program demonstrated high efficacy in fostering a morally grounded Qur'anic generation and stands as a concrete model for executing the Tri Dharma of Higher Education in rural communities.

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