

Beyond the *Juz* Count: Program Type, Ability Grouping, and Teacher-Mediated Variation in Qur'an Memorization Target-Setting at an Indonesian Islamic Secondary School

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Abstract

Tahfidz al-Qur'an programs are widespread in Islamic secondary schools, yet research on them concentrates on program management, memorization methods, and institution-level evaluation rather than on how memorization targets are set and implemented for individual students; the evidence base also remains concentrated in Indonesia and Malaysia. This study examined how one Integrated Islamic senior high school, SMAIT Ulil Albab in Batam City, sets, implements, and evaluates its Qur'an memorization targets, guided by three questions regarding target setting, implementation, and evaluation. Using a descriptive single-case qualitative design, the researchers purposively sampled nine informants: one coordinator, six teachers across three ability tiers, and two students for semi-structured interviews of 40–50 minutes, supplemented by observation and documentation, and analyzed interactively with NVivo. Credibility rested on triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Targets were found to operate on two intersecting axes: a program-track axis that sets boarding students at six *juz* and full-day students at three *juz* over three years, and a *halaqah* ability-grouping axis (high, normal, low) that governs the daily pace. Implementation ran through *ziyadah*, *muraja'ah*, and deposit activity adjusted to each student's progress, although stated daily minimums varied across teachers within the same tier. Evaluation was continuous and multidimensional, yet the completion certificate ultimately marked achievement as a binary distinction. The findings suggest that ability-based target-setting may operate as categorical assignment followed by looser teacher-level operationalization, and they highlight an unresolved tension between process-oriented evaluation and outcome-based certification that schools designing comparable target systems should address.

Keywords: Qur'an memorization targets; *tahfidz* education; ability-based grouping (*halaqah*); teacher-mediated differentiation; Islamic secondary school.

Introduction

The Qur'an is a guideline for Muslim life, covering various aspects such as faith, worship, *muamalah*, morals, and education. Engaging with the Qur'an is not limited to reading and understanding it; it also includes memorizing it, which serves to preserve the accuracy of the revelation across generations. In the Malay–Indonesian world, this preservation function has become the foundation of *tahfidz* al-Qur'an education, in which secondary-school *huffaz* are prepared to safeguard and transmit the text.¹

Memorizing the Qur'an is known as *Tahfidzul Qur'an*, and the *tahfidz* program has become a flagship offering widely implemented across Islamic educational institutions. The program is designed not only to produce students who memorize the Qur'an, but also to shape Qur'anic character while raising students' spiritual and academic quality; effective *tahfidz* program management has been shown to influence both students' academic achievement and their moral foundations.² This dual orientation has encouraged the integration of *tahfidz* and mainstream academic education, enabling institutions to produce a generation of *huffaz* who both master the Qur'an and excel academically.³ The growing demand for such institutions is also linked to the broader expansion of Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) education among Indonesia's rising Muslim middle class.⁴ and to the increasing use of *tahfidz* programs as a marker of institutional identity, leadership, and competitive advantage.⁵ Against this backdrop, Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT) continue to strive to improve the quality of their *tahfidz* programs as part of their identity and excellence.

Memorizing the Qur'an requires consistency, dedication, and sustained effort. Because the *tahfidz* process trains students to be disciplined and independent, and to

¹ Fatimah Zaharah Ismail et al., "Retaining Quranic Memorisation for Huffaz at the Malaysian Tertiary Institutions: Key Challenges and Future IoT Potentialities," *Proceedings – 2019 International Conference on Future Internet of Things and Cloud Workshops*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1109/FiCloudW.2019.00018>.

² Heru Setiawan et al., "Integrating Tahfidz Program Management for Comprehensive Student Character Development," *Kharisma* 4, no. 1 (2025): 44–59, <https://doi.org/10.59373/kharisma.v4i1.63>.

³ A Abdullah et al., "Integration of Tahfidz and Academic Education," *Global Journal Al-Thaqafah*, 2024, 60–72, <https://doi.org/10.7187/GJATSI122024-5>.

⁴ Siti Nur Hidayah, "Pesantren for Middle-Class Muslims in Indonesia (Between Religious Commodification and Pious Neoliberalism)," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2021): 209–44, <https://doi.org/10.21043/QIJS.V9I1.7641>.

⁵ Asmendri, "Transformational Leadership in Islamic Education Institution through Social Media Engagement," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v10i2.40221>; Imron Muttaqin et al., "Competitive Advantage Management of Madrasah in the Artificial Intelligence Era," *Munaddhomah* 6, no. 4 (2025): 661–80, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v6i4.2292>.

develop a good attitude,⁶ the habits it cultivates are transferable to other domains, including academic study and social interaction; empirical work has also linked Qur'an memorization to students' academic performance.⁷ Nevertheless, memorizing the Qur'an is a significant and demanding responsibility: anyone can attempt it, but not everyone can memorize it well. The problems faced by memorizers are many and varied, ranging from sustaining interest and creating a suitable environment to managing time and selecting an appropriate memorization method. Institutions consistently report challenges arising from variation in students' memorization speed and the durability of retention,⁸ and student-level factors such as depth of Qur'anic comprehension have themselves been identified as influencing memorization performance.⁹ To address these difficulties, each school develops its own approach to motivating students to memorize, one of which is setting memorization targets.

Across Indonesia and Malaysia, which together constitute the primary empirical base for *tahfidz* research to date, research on *tahfidz* education has grown considerably and increasingly adopted structured, measurable approaches to assessing memorization outcomes. A meta-analysis of Qur'anic-memorization research has mapped the field's research trends and consolidated evidence on effective practice.¹⁰ Empirical studies of curriculum practice in private *tahfidz* institutions have examined how the form and method of curriculum implementation shape the quality of learning,¹¹ and a recent systematic review of *tahfidz* curriculum evaluation reinforces this picture, reporting a persistent shortage of longitudinal studies and insufficient empirical evidence linking

⁶ Ahmad Tanzeh et al., "The Student Management Based on Participants in Improving Quality of Tahfidz Program with Supply Chain Practices," *International Journal of Supply Chain Management* 9, no. 2 (2020): 889–96.

⁷ Nor Habibah Tarmuji et al., "Linking Study of Memorising Quran with Academic Performance," *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education* 37, no. 1 (2022): 181–91, <https://doi.org/10.21315/apjee2022.37.1.9>.

⁸ Mohammad Syairozi Dimyathi et al., "The Cognitive-Pedagogical Link: Working Memory Strategies and the Enhancement of Qur'an Memorization and Retention," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 2 (2025): 376–89, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v11i2.44968>.

⁹ Mohd Hakim Mothar Rijan et al., "The Influence of Quran Understanding on Tahfidz Students' Memorization Performance," *Global Journal Al-Thaqafah*, 2025, 57–69, <https://doi.org/10.7187/GJATSI102025-4>.

¹⁰ Ossman Nordin et al., "The Art of Quranic Memorization: A Meta-Analysis," *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 31, no. 2 (2023): 787–801, <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.31.2.16>.

¹¹ Abd Rahman Abd Ghani et al., "Tahfidz (Memorization Sciences) Curriculum Practice: An Empirical Study from Private School in Johor, Malaysia," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 1 (2025): 233–45, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v8i1.265>.

curriculum features to students' memorization achievement.¹² In parallel, scholars have moved from earlier school-level appraisals of student quality toward validated,¹³ institution-level measurement instruments, such as the Tahfidz School Performance Index and the *Maqasid*-Shariah-based Tahfidz Empowerment Index, which are aligned with Malaysia's National Tahfidz Education Policy to benchmark tahfidz institutions systematically. This trajectory reflects a clear shift toward standardized, measurable evaluation of *tahfidz* education, yet it operates almost entirely at the institutional and curricular levels. The pattern is visible in the retrieved literature itself: across the Scopus-indexed *tahfidz* studies reviewed for this article, the work concentrates on program and institutional management, curriculum design and evaluation, institution-level performance instruments, memorization methods, cognitive determinants of memorization, and student well-being, whereas measurable target-setting appears almost exclusively at the program level, most directly in an evaluation of a mandatory one-*juz*-before-graduation requirement assessed through the CIPP model rather than as an ability-differentiated system that is set, implemented, and evaluated for individual students within a single school.¹⁴ It should also be noted that this evidence base is concentrated in Indonesia and Malaysia; comparative evidence from other regions remains comparatively rare, though not absent. Work from Saudi Arabia, for instance, has examined government-level efforts to develop Qur'an memorization *halaqah*, the relationship between memorization practice and academic performance among university students, and, closer to the age group examined here, the effect on short-term memory recall among high school students. In contrast, phenomenological work on Muslim Filipino students in an Islamic boarding school extends the regional coverage of this literature beyond the Indonesia–Malaysia–Saudi cluster.¹⁵ This regional imbalance is a scope limitation the article returns to in its concluding discussion.

¹² Abd Rahman Abd Ghani, Miftachul Huda, and Novel Lyndon, "Curriculum Evaluation for Tahfidz (Sciences of Memorization Education): Empirical Evidence from Private Education Institution of Johor, Malaysia," *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching* 15, no. 2 (2026): 194–204, <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v15n2p194>.

¹³ A Abdul Rahim, Y Aminurraasyid, and O Mohd Farihal, "Student Quality Evaluation amongst Tahfidz Science Schools in Malaysia," *Journal of Social Sciences Research*, 2018, 319–24, <https://doi.org/10.32861/jssr.spi6.319.324>.

¹⁴ Siti Muawanah et al., "Evaluating Mandatory Tahfidz Quran Program Implementation at Madrasah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (2022): 239–54, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v8i2.20330>.

¹⁵ Basir Jarah Anilon et al., "Academic Commitment of Muslim Filipino Students in an Islamic Boarding School: A Phenomenological Study," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 1 (2026): 227–45, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v9i1.302>.

SMAIT Ulil Albab Batam City is one of the Islamic educational institutions that integrates the general and *tahfidz* curricula and applies a structured, ability-differentiated, memorization-target system. The school runs two program tracks: boarding and full-day, with each track carrying a different cumulative target: boarding students are expected to complete six *juz* over three years, while full-day students are expected to complete three *juz* over the same period, a difference attributed to boarding students' additional evening deposit sessions in the dormitory.¹⁶ Within both tracks, students are further grouped into high, normal, and low *halaqah* based on their Qur'an reading and memorization abilities, and this grouping, rather than the program track alone, determines the daily memorization pace expected of each student. Target-setting in this system is therefore calibrated along two axes at once: the type of program a student follows, and the ability level assigned through *halaqah* grouping.

Research on the *tahfidz* program has been conducted across various educational settings. At the level of program management, studies have examined how structured planning and staged evaluation sustain memorization quality: Rustiana and Ma'arif¹⁷ analyzed a flagship *tahfidz* program through the functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating, finding that structured planning sustained the quality of student memorization, while parallel work on madrasah-based quality improvement at a *tahfidz* boarding school reached comparable conclusions about the managerial conditions that support the program.¹⁸ Focusing more directly on targets, Muawanah et al., evaluated a mandatory *tahfidz* program requiring each student to memorize at least one *juz* before graduation; using the CIPP (context–input–process–product) model, they reported that the program ran reasonably well in process terms but achieved only modest effectiveness in outcomes, with limited integration of *tahfidz* into institutional vision and uneven parental support.¹⁹ At the methodological level, other studies have focused on specific

¹⁶ Muawanah et al., "Evaluating Mandatory Tahfidz Quran Program Implementation at Madrasah."

¹⁷ Dewi Rustiana and Muhammad Anas Maarif, "Manajemen Program Unggulan Tahfidz Qur'an Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Hafalan Al-Qur'an Siswa," *Kharisma: Jurnal Administrasi Dan Manajemen Pendidikan* 1, no. 1 (2022): 12–24.

¹⁸ Endar Evta Yuda Prayogi et al., "Management of Madrasa-Based Education Quality Improvement at the Tahfidz Qur'an Islamic Boarding School in Metro City," *Review of International Geographical Education Online* 11, no. 7 (2021): 480–91, <https://doi.org/10.48047/rigeo.11.07.52>.

¹⁹ Muawanah et al., "Evaluating Mandatory Tahfidz Quran Program Implementation at Madrasah."

memorization techniques, such as the Sisir method, to improve the quality of memorization among part-time (kalong) students.²⁰

Taken together, existing research has largely concentrated on *tahfidz* program management in general, on specific learning methods, and on program- or institution-level evaluation. Research that specifically examines the system by which Qur'an memorization targets are implemented, encompassing the mechanism of setting targets, implementing them in daily learning, monitoring their achievement, and evaluating them at the senior-high-school level, remains comparatively limited. Therefore, this study analyzes the Qur'an memorization target-implementation system at SMAIT Ulil Albab Batam City, one of the schools that applies memorization targets in a structured manner within its *tahfidz* program. The analysis is guided by three research questions: (1) How does the school set its Qur'an memorization targets for students? (2) How are those targets implemented in daily *tahfidz* learning? (3) How is the achievement of those targets evaluated? Addressing these questions offers a within-school, individual-level account of target implementation that the existing program- and institution-level literature has not provided.

Research Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a single-case study design. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research seeks to understand how the memorization-target system is enacted through participants' practices, perceptions, and meanings in the natural school setting, rather than measuring it against predefined variables. A single-case design was selected because it enables an intensive, in-depth examination of one bounded phenomenon, the target-implementation system within a single institution. Comparable qualitative studies have been used effectively to explore memorization practices and program dynamics in *tahfidz* settings,²¹ and case-study designs bounded by a single school or boarding institution have been adopted in prior *tahfidz* research.²²

²⁰ Illiyyun Kurniailah and Muhammad Abu Bakar, "Increasing the Quality of Memorizing the Qur'an for Santri Kalong through the Sisir Method," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2023): 253–70, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v6i2.3378>.

²¹ Ermis Suryana et al., "Exploring Memorization Patterns in the Tahfidz and Tarjamah Qur'an Programs," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 2 (2024): 375–86, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v10i2.29969>.

²² Amka, "Inclusion in Tahfidz-Based Schooling: Participation, Constraint, and Everyday Adaptation," *British Journal of Religious Education*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2026.2679569>; Kurniailah

The research was conducted at SMAIT Ulil Albab in Batam City, which implements a *tahfidz* al-Qur'an program with a structured system of memorization targets. Nine informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in, and knowledge of, the target system: one *tahfidz* coordinator, who designs and oversees the program; six *tahfidz* teachers, selected to cover both genders across all three ability tiers (two teachers per tier high, normal, and low); and two students, one each from the high and low tiers, included to corroborate the teacher and coordinator accounts from the learner's perspective rather than as a representative student sample. Recruitment continued until interviews and observations yielded no substantially new information relevant to the three research questions. Full informant characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Informant Characteristics

Code	Role	<i>Halahah</i> / Program	Interview Date
ADZ	<i>Tahfidz</i> Coordinator	—	31 March 2026
HN	<i>Tahfidz</i> Teacher (Akhwat)	High	31 March 2026
ME	<i>Tahfidz</i> Teacher (Akhwat)	Normal	1 April 2026
ICH	<i>Tahfidz</i> Teacher (Ikhwan)	High	9 April 2026
AQ	<i>Tahfidz</i> Teacher (Ikhwan)	Normal	8 April 2026
SO	<i>Tahfidz</i> Teacher (Akhwat)	Low	1 April 2026
SYA	<i>Tahfidz</i> Teacher (Ikhwan)	Low	8 April 2026
MAMP	Student	High, Ikhwan, Full-Day	9 April 2026
MZDI	Student	Low, Ikhwan, Boarding	6 April 2026

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with the coordinator, teachers, and students using an interview guide organized around the three research questions: how targets are set, how they are implemented in daily learning, and how their achievement is evaluated. Each interview lasted approximately 40–50 minutes, was conducted in Indonesian, and with participants' consent was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Non-participant observation was carried out by attending *tahfidz* learning activities directly, *tadarus*, *muraja'ah*, *tahsin*, and memorization deposits (*setoran*) across two periods, from 31 March to 9 April and from 10 to 19 April 2026, with field notes recorded throughout to capture how targets were enacted in daily practice. Documentation comprised the school's *tahfidz* assessment records (daily, monthly, and end-of-semester recaps), learning schedules, and photographs of learning activities. Interview excerpts

and Abu Bakar, "Increasing the Quality of Memorizing the Qur'an for Santri Kalong through the Sisir Method."

reported in this article are presented in the original Indonesian with English translations prepared by the researchers and checked against the source transcripts to preserve the speakers' meaning.

Data were analyzed interactively through three concurrent stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, following the interactive model of qualitative data analysis.²³ Coding proceeded in two steps: an initial set of codes was derived deductively from the three research questions, and these were then refined inductively as further categories emerged from the transcripts and field notes. NVivo software was used to manage and organize the interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation records during the coding and reduction stages; this software-assisted procedure has also been applied in prior *tahfidz* case-study research, indicating its established use in this domain.²⁴

To ensure the validity of the data, the study applied triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. Source triangulation was achieved by cross-checking accounts across three informant categories: the *tahfidz* coordinator, *tahfidz* teachers, and students. Technique triangulation combined in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Time triangulation was achieved by collecting data across two sequential phases within the same semester: interviews and a first observation period (31 March–9 April 2026), focused on target-setting and implementation, followed by a second observation period (10–19 April 2026), focused on validating the evaluation process described in interviews. Credibility was further strengthened through member checking; preliminary findings were confirmed with informants after the interviews to verify that their statements had been accurately understood and represented, and through an audit trail of field notes maintained throughout data collection and analysis. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent, and informant identities were anonymized using codes (e.g., ADZ, HN); full ethical procedures are detailed in the Ethics Statement at the end of this article.

²³ Matthew B Miles and A Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (sage, 1994).

²⁴ Rustiana and Maarif, "Manajemen Program Unggulan Tahfidz Qur'an Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Hafalan Al-Qur'an Siswa."

Research Results

Setting Students' Qur'an Memorization Targets

The findings show that SMAIT Ulil Albab Batam City sets Qur'an memorization targets along two intersecting axes: the type of educational program and the student's ability level. The *tahfidz* program is divided into boarding and full-day tracks, with cumulative targets of six *juz* and three *juz*, respectively, over three years. Regardless of program track, students are grouped into high, normal, and low *halaqah*, and this grouping governs the day-to-day pace of memorization expected of each student.

The *tahfidz* coordinator described both dimensions of the system together:

"At SMAIT Ulil Albab, the *tahfidz* program applies a grouping system based on students' ability level (a grading system): low, normal, and high... In the boarding program, the memorization target is six *juz*, whereas in the full-day program, it is three *juz*. Even so, the targets are conditional and adjusted to each student's ability." (ADZ, *Tahfidz* Coordinator, 31 March 2026)

A teacher supervising the high-level *halaqah* linked the target difference directly to the additional evening coaching that boarding students receive:

"For memorization targets, the school has set different provisions for boarding and full-day students. Boarding students are targeted to complete six *juz* over three years, while full-day students are targeted to reach three *juz* over three years. The difference is because boarding students have additional *tahfidz* activities at night, including deposit sessions." (HN, *Tahfidz* Teacher, Akhwat, High *Halaqah*, 31 March 2026)

A teacher in the normal-level *halaqah* noted that this program-based difference coexists with individualized flexibility:

"Boarding students have additional deposit activities in the dormitory at night, so they have more *tahfidz* coaching time than full-day students. In addition, the targets given to students are flexible and adjusted to each student's ability in memorizing the Qur'an." (ME, *Tahfidz* Teacher, Akhwat, Normal *Halaqah*, 1 April 2026)

Students at both ends of the ability spectrum affirmed that the target system was clear and attainable. A student in the high-level *halaqah* on the full-day track observed:

"The target-setting system applied at the school is good because it gives students clear direction and goals."

A student in the low-level *halaqah* on the boarding track offered a similar assessment from a different starting point:

"The targets set by the school still match students' ability. As long as we memorize regularly and use our time well, the target is still achievable."

Observation conducted between 31 March and 9 April 2026 corroborated these accounts on four points: (1) students were grouped into high, normal, and low *halaqah* based on reading and memorization ability, and this grouping was the basis teachers used

to assign targets; (2) boarding students received *tahfidz* coaching both during school hours and at night in the dormitory, while full-day students' coaching was confined to the school schedule, and this time difference tracked the difference in cumulative target; (3) teachers calibrated their guidance to each student's demonstrated ability rather than applying a single standard; and (4) progress was monitored continuously through deposit (setoran) activity.

Table 2.
Cumulative Target Structure by Program

Program	Duration	Cumulative Target	Rationale
Boarding	3 years	6 juz	Additional evening deposit sessions in the dormitory
Full-Day	3 years	3 juz	<i>Tahfidz</i> activity is limited to school instructional hours

Table 3.
Daily Target by *Halaqah* Ability Level

<i>Halaqah</i> Level	Daily New-Memorization Target	Source
High	½–1 page/day (not fixed; interleaved with <i>muraja'ah</i>)	HN
High	Flexible; online deposit outside hours if unmet	ICH
Normal	Minimum 6 lines/day	ME
Normal	Minimum 5 lines/day	AQ
Low	Average 3 lines/day, up to 5 for stronger students	SYA
Low	Individualized, no fixed line count	SO

As Table 3 shows, teachers nominally assigned to the same ability tier reported different daily minimums, for example, six lines in one normal-level *halaqah* and five in another, indicating that the translation of an ability category into a concrete daily figure varied across teachers. This pattern is examined in the Discussion.

Implementing the Targets in Daily Learning

The findings show that memorization targets at SMAIT Ulil Albab are implemented gradually and flexibly according to each student's ability. Different daily targets apply to the high, normal, and low *halaqah*: students with stronger ability receive higher targets, while those still needing guidance in recitation and memorization receive lower ones. Implementation is oriented not only toward adding new memorization (*ziyadah*) but also toward *muraja'ah* that maintains the quality of previously acquired memorization.

The high-level teacher explained that targets are adjusted to each student's ability and progress rather than applied uniformly:

“Students in the high *halaqah* have a daily target of about half a page to one page. However, the target is not always fixed each day, because students also perform *muraja'ah*. If the target is not met, it is carried over and added the next day,

according to each student's ability." (HN, *Tahfidz* Teacher, Akhwat, High *Halaqah*, 31 March 2026)

Implementation also allows students who have not met a session's target to continue outside learning hours through online deposits:

"If a student has not reached the assigned target, the student is allowed to continue memorizing and to deposit it online outside learning hours." (ICH, *Tahfidz* Teacher, Ikhwan, High *Halaqah*, 9 April 2026)

Teachers in the normal- and low-level *halaqah* described how text-intrinsic difficulty, not only student ability, shapes what is achievable on a given day:

"I cannot impose the same target on all students, because every verse has a different level of difficulty. A student may memorize one to two pages today but only half a page tomorrow because the verses are harder for them." (ME, *Tahfidz* Teacher, Akhwat, Normal *Halaqah*, 1 April 2026)

"The target system in the low *halaqah* is adjusted to each student's ability. I follow each student's progress and do not impose the same target on everyone, because their abilities differ in both reading and memorizing the Qur'an." (SO, *Tahfidz* Teacher, Akhwat, Low *Halaqah*, 1 April 2026)

Observation reinforced these findings. During learning, teachers gave students time to prepare their memorization before deposit, guided those struggling with memorization or recitation, and monitored progress through individual deposit activities. Implementation proceeded flexibly: students who reached the target could add new memorization, while those who had not were allowed to continue at the next meeting without neglecting recitation quality or memorization accuracy.

Evaluating Target Achievement

Evaluation of target achievement at SMAIT Ulil Albab Batam City is conducted continuously through daily, monthly, and end-of-semester assessments to track the development of memorization and the level of target attainment. The aspects assessed extend beyond the amount memorized to recitation quality, *tajwid* accuracy, fluency, discipline, activeness, communication, learning completeness, and students' attitudes during *tahfidz* activities.

The coordinator described the scope of the assessment and its consequences for the final certification:

"What is assessed in the *tahfidz* program is not only the amount memorized, but also Qur'an recitation, *tajwid*, attendance discipline in the *halaqah*, learning completeness, activeness, communication, and personal neatness and cleanliness... At the end of the program, the *tahfidz* certificate carries a different notation for students who have reached the memorization target and those who have not." (ADZ, *Tahfidz* Coordinator, 31 March 2026)

Table 4.
Evaluation Documentation Types

Type	Description
Daily	Record of each student’s deposit (setoran) achievement
Monthly	Recap of each student’s monthly memorization development
Semester	Recap of end-of-semester evaluation of target attainment

Observation during the second period (10–19 April 2026), supported by assessment documentation, showed that memorization was evaluated systematically and continuously. During deposit activities, the teacher listened to each student’s recitation, corrected *makhārij al-ḥurūf*, memorization fluency, and the application of *tajwid*, and recorded progress as the basis for monitoring target achievement. Teachers also assessed discipline, activeness, readiness to learn, and attitude during *tahfidz* activities. Evaluation results determined the follow-up: students who reached the target continued adding memorization, while those who had not received assistance and reinforcement through *muraja’ah* did not.

Discussion

Setting the Targets: A Two-Axis System

The memorization-target system at SMAIT Ulil Albab Batam City combines two design principles that operate at different levels: program track sets the multi-year cumulative ceiling (six *juz* for boarding, three for full-day), while *halaqah*-level ability grouping governs the day-to-day pace beneath that ceiling. Read as a management design, this two-axis structure is consistent with the view of *tahfidz* programs as an integrated planning–organizing–evaluating cycle, in which structured management sustains the quality of memorization across a cohort.²⁵

The program-level difference itself is straightforwardly explained by contact time: boarding students receive dormitory-based evening coaching that full-day students do not, so the six-versus-three-*juz* gap tracks a difference in instructional exposure rather than an assumed difference in student ability between the two tracks, an interpretation consistent with evidence that institutional context and delivery conditions materially shape memorization outcomes.²⁶

The *halaqah*-level data, however, complicate a purely tidy reading of the system. The clearest sign of this is not the modest numerical spread in stated minimums, six versus

²⁵ Rustiana and Maarif, “Manajemen Program Unggulan Tahfidz Qur’an Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Hafalan Al-Qur’an Siswa.”

²⁶ Muawanah et al., “Evaluating Mandatory Tahfidz Quran Program Implementation at Madrasah.”

five lines across two normal-level *halaqah*, but a small gap that could reflect little more than rounding, or a difference in how teachers conceive the target at all. In the low tier, one teacher set a fixed three-to-five-line range, while another declined to set any line count, working case by case based on each student's progress; in the high tier, one teacher named a half-to-one-page range, while another described the target as flexible and extendable through online deposit. Teachers assigned to the same nominal tier thus differ less in the number they set than in whether they treat the target as a fixed quantity or an individually negotiated one.

This finding is consistent with previous research emphasizing that Qur'an memorization should be conducted through an organized learning process that takes into account each student's abilities. This principle is also applied at SMAIT Ulil Albab Batam City through the grouping of students into high, normal, and low *halaqah* based on their Qur'an reading and memorization abilities. This grouping serves as a basis for teachers to determine memorization targets and provide guidance according to students' abilities and progress. In addition to organizing students according to their ability levels, the *halaqah* system also helps teachers determine daily memorization targets and an appropriate pace that corresponds to each student's individual condition.

This pattern is consistent with the ability-grouping system setting a category (high/normal/low) while leaving the operational translation of that category into a daily target to individual teacher judgment, an arrangement compatible with, and arguably a practical necessity given, evidence that memorization speed and retention vary substantially even among students nominally at the same level. If so, the "measurable target system" that motivates this study would be measurable chiefly at the program-track level (six vs. three *juz*) and considerably less standardized at the level where students experience it day-to-day. We did not identify prior evaluations of mandatory *tahfidz* targets that examine this within-tier, teacher-mediated variability rather than program-level effectiveness.²⁷ The present case can only surface the pattern, and a design with more teachers per tier would be needed to confirm it (see Limitations).

Finally, the flexibility that both teachers and students describe targets adjusted, deferred, or carried over according to individual progress should be read alongside this same finding: flexibility is not merely a pedagogical accommodation layered on top of a

²⁷ Muawanah et al., "Evaluating Mandatory Tahfidz Quran Program Implementation at Madrasah."

fixed target, but in practice a primary mechanism through which target-setting is realized, since the numeric target itself already varies by whoever is teaching a given *halaqah*.

Implementing the Targets

Implementation at SMAIT Ulil Albab translates the target ceiling (six or three *juz*) into daily practice through *ziyadah*, *muraja'ah*, deposit (setoran), and teacher assistance, a sequence consistent with the recognized repertoire of *tahfidz* learning methods (*talaqqi*, *tikrar*, *muraja'ah*, and new-memorization deposit) documented in prior work.²⁸ *Muraja'ah*, in particular, is treated as integral to, rather than peripheral to, target attainment, in keeping with evidence that systematic revision prevents previously memorized material from being lost.²⁹

However, the data point to a source of daily-target variability that existing individualization frameworks do not fully account for. The literature on tailoring *tahfidz* targets to learners generally frames variation as a function of between-student differences in memorization speed and retention capacity, which is why working-memory-informed, individualized strategies are recommended.³⁰ The account from the normal-level *halaqah* complicates this framing: the source of variation the teacher identifies is not the student's stable ability level, but the day-to-day difficulty of the text itself; some passages are intrinsically harder to memorize regardless of who is memorizing them. The school's practice of allowing an unmet target to roll over to the next day functions, in effect, as an informal accommodation for text-intrinsic difficulty, a mechanism distinct from and additional to the ability-based differentiation the *halaqah* system already provides. This suggests that individualization in *tahfidz* target implementation operates along at least two independent axes (learner ability and text difficulty), with only the first addressed in the individualization literature to date.

²⁸ Fathiyah Mohd Fakhruddin et al., "Process and Method of Tahfidz Learning among Students in Malaysian Government Religious Secondary Schools," *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction* 17, no. 2 (2020): 311–40; Abd Muhaimin Ahmad et al., "Diversifying Quranic Revision Methods Using Gamification-Based Teaching Material for Tahfidz Education," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education* 13, no. 2 (2024): 987–96, <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v13i2.26218>.

²⁹ Ahmad et al., "Diversifying Quranic Revision Methods Using Gamification-Based Teaching Material for Tahfidz Education"; Gio Andrian and Indah Muliati, "Pelaksanaan Metode At-Taisir Dalam Menghafal Pada Kelas VII A Alquran Di Pondok Pesantren," *An-Nuha* 3, no. 1 (2023): 126–38.

³⁰ Nandalifia Alfisyah, Rizka Harfiani, and Hasrian Rudi Setiawan, "The Principal's Role in Implementing Religious Moderation Values in Junior High School of Tanjung Beringin District," *FIKROTUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Manajemen Islam* 13, no. 2 SE-Articles (December 14, 2024): 107–20, <https://doi.org/10.32806/jf.v14i2.563>.

A second point of interest concerns the online deposit option offered to students who have not met a session's target (ICH, *Tahfidz* Teacher, Ikhwan, High *Halaqah*, 9 April 2026). Prior discussions of technology in *tahfidz* education have largely framed digital tools as purpose-built instruments layered onto the program, IoT-based memorization-retention systems for tertiary *huffaz* or gamified revision applications.³¹ What this teacher describes is lower-tech and improvised: an informal extension of the deposit window through whatever communication channel is at hand, created to solve an immediate scheduling problem rather than to enhance memorization pedagogy as such.³² That mode of use is not unprecedented; pandemic-era *tahfidz* learning likewise repurposed an everyday messaging application for memorization deposits rather than adopting a dedicated platform, suggesting that, in everyday practice, technology may enter *tahfidz* implementation as ad hoc flexibility at least as often as the structured intervention envisioned in the technology-in-tahfidz literature. How routinely this happens, and with what pedagogical consequences, is a question a single case can raise but not settle.

Evaluating Target Achievement

Evaluation at SMAIT Ulil Albab is continuous (daily, monthly, and end-of-semester) and multidimensional, assessing not only the amount memorized but also recitation quality, *tajwid* accuracy, discipline, activeness, communication, learning completeness, and personal conduct. This breadth is consistent with the view of *tahfidz* evaluation as a systematic judgment of program effectiveness rather than a simple tally of pages memorized, and with the logic embodied in validated institutional instruments developed to make *tahfidz* evaluation measurable and comparable.³³

Two aspects of the evaluation data sit less comfortably with that literature than a purely confirmatory reading would suggest. First, the criteria recorded here, including

³¹ Ismail et al., "Retaining Quranic Memorisation for Huffaz at the Malaysian Tertiary Institutions: Key Challenges and Future IoT Potentialities"; Putri Lizah Aryani and Indah Muliati, "Pengaruh Program Tahfiz Al-Quran Terhadap Pengembangan Akhlak Siswa Di Rumah Tahfiz Al-Hufazh Padang Koto Gadang," *Tazakka: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Keislaman* 2, no. 04 (2024): 305–18.

³² Ahmad et al., "Diversifying Quranic Revision Methods Using Gamification-Based Teaching Material for Tahfidz Education."

³³ Muawanah et al., "Evaluating Mandatory Tahfidz Quran Program Implementation at Madrasah"; Nur Fadilah Ramadhany and Indah Muliati, "Pelaksanaan Tahfidz Alquran Di Sekolah Menengah Pertama Islam Terpadu," *An-Nuha* 4, no. 1 (2024): 14–26; Sriyanto, Suyatno, and Ishafit, "Strengthening Character Education through Integrative Islamic Education Management: Synchronizing Teacher and Parent Roles," *Kharisma* 5, no. 1 (2026): 152–70, <https://doi.org/10.59373/kharisma.v5i1.179>.

personal tidiness and hygiene (kerapian dan kebersihan diri), alongside *tajwid* and discipline, operate at a considerably finer grain than the institutional-level indices in the literature. The *Tahfidz* School Performance Index and the *Maqasid*-Shariah-based Tahfidz Empowerment Index are designed to benchmark programs or institutions.³⁴ They are not designed to, and do not, capture a teacher's day-to-day judgment of a student's personal conduct in the *halaqah*. The evaluation practice observed here, therefore, occupies a layer beneath what current validated instruments measure, a classroom-level layer of assessment that institutional indices, by design, cannot see. This is not a contradiction of the institutional-index literature so much as evidence of a gap it does not yet address: aggregate, institution-level measurement and granular, teacher-mediated daily judgment appear to be two largely disconnected evaluation systems operating in the same school.

Second, the finding that the *tahfidz* certificate distinguishes between students who reached the memorization target and those who did not (ADZ, Tahfidz Coordinator, 31 March 2026) creates an internal tension that the school's own evaluation design fails to resolve. The multidimensional, process-oriented criteria discipline, activeness, communication, and attitude are consistent with the broader purpose of *tahfidz* as character formation rather than achievement alone. Process-oriented framing is precisely what should, in principle, soften the consequences of an unmet numeric target. Yet the terminal credential still marks a binary achieved/not-achieved distinction. A student who is disciplined, active, and has memorized carefully but has not reached the full *juz* target still receives a certificate marked accordingly. This suggests that, whatever the formative intent of daily and monthly evaluation, the school's summative credentialing ultimately reverts to a single achievement threshold, a design tension between process-oriented pedagogy and outcome-based certification that the evaluation literature cited here, which focuses on measuring achievement rather than on the consequences of how achievement is recorded, does not address. Given evidence that *tahfidz* participation is closely linked to students' psychological and health well-being, and that unmet memorization demands can themselves carry a well-being cost, this certificate-level binary is worth flagging as a design feature whose consequences may extend beyond measurement accuracy.

³⁴ Azam Othman et al., "Development and Validation of a Tahfidz School Performance Index," *Intellectual Discourse* 32, no. 2 (2024): 585–606, <https://doi.org/10.31436/id.v32i2.2157>.

Theoretical Contribution

This study's contribution to the *tahfidz* literature lies less in confirming that target-setting exists that much is already documented than in describing the structure by which a single school operationalizes it. Two contributions follow from the findings above.

First, the case shows that memorization-target design in this setting operates on two independent axes rather than one: a program-track axis that sets a multi-year cumulative ceiling (six *juz* for boarding, three for full-day), and a *halaqah*-ability axis that governs daily pacing beneath that ceiling. Existing *tahfidz* evaluation and management literature has generally treated target-setting as a single-level variable, either a program-wide minimum, or an individually adapted pace driven by ability difference.³⁵ The two-axis structure documented here, where the ceiling is set by program logistics and the pace is set (and, as shown above, unevenly operationalized) by *halaqah* assignment, has not, to our knowledge, been described as a distinct design pattern in prior *tahfidz* target-implementation research, and offers a more granular unit of analysis for future comparative work across schools.³⁶

Second, the study points to teacher judgment, rather than only student ability, as a possible independent source of target variability, extending, in hypothesis-generating form, the individualization literature that attributes adapted targets mainly to differences in students' memorization speed and retention. The cross-teacher variation summarized in Table 3, though observed rather than systematically measured, is consistent with the possibility that translating an ability category into an operational daily target is itself teacher-mediated rather than fully standardized. On this reading, individualized target-setting in *tahfidz* might be better modeled as a two-step process: categorical assignment, which the school controls, followed by teacher-level operationalization, which, in this case, the school governs more loosely rather than as a single act of adaptation. We

³⁵ Toto Alwi, Kms Badaruddin, and Febriyanti, "Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Dalam Membentuk Karakter Islami Siswa," *Munaddhomah* 4, no. 3 (2023): 756–66, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v4i3.466>.

³⁶ Hesham Abdulkarim Almoshagah, M Y Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff, and Ali Ali Gobaili Saged, "Al-Mamlakah Al-'Arabiyyah Al-Sa'udiyyah Wa Juhuduha Fi Tatwir Halaq Tahfiz Al-Qur'an Al-Karim [The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Its Efforts to Develop the Holy Qur'an Memorization Circles]," *QURANICA: International Journal of Quranic Research* 14, no. 2 (2022): 312–46, <https://doi.org/10.22452/quranica.vol14no2.21>; Ali Ridho et al., "Democratization of Islamic Education Through School-Based Management," *FIKROTUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Manajemen Islam* 10, no. 2 SE-Articles (July 29, 2021): 1892–1908, <https://doi.org/10.32806/jf.v14i02.5195>.

advance this as a proposition for testing in multi-teacher designs, not as an established finding.

Limitations

Several limitations should be noted. First, this is a single-case qualitative study of one school; the specific target figures (six/three *juz*, *halaqah*-level daily minimums) and the teacher-mediated variability documented here describe SMAIT Ulil Albab and should not be generalized to *tahfidz* institutions elsewhere without further comparative research. Second, the evidence base this study draws on for situating its findings is concentrated in Indonesia and Malaysia; comparative literature on *tahfidz* -related education from other regions exists, for example, government-level, university-level, and high-school-level studies from Saudi Arabia, but remains comparatively sparse relative to the Southeast Asian literature. None of it addresses school-level, ability-differentiated target-setting of the kind examined here. Third, the cross-teacher variation in daily targets identified in the Discussion was observed, not systematically measured: with six teachers distributed across three ability tiers and two genders, this study cannot determine whether the variation reflects idiosyncratic differences between individual teachers or a more general pattern across the school's *halaqah* system; a study designed specifically to test this would need a larger sample of teachers per tier. Fourth, the study documents the target-setting and implementation system as observed over a roughly three-week period (31 March–19 April 2026) and does not include outcome data that is, it cannot establish what proportion of students in each track and *halaqah* level actually complete their assigned target by the end of the three-year period, which would be necessary to evaluate the system's effectiveness rather than only its design and daily operation.

Conclusion

The system for implementing the Qur'an memorization target at SMAIT Ulil Albab Batam City is structured to consider both the type of educational program and each student's ability. Cumulative targets are set at the program-track level, six *juz* for boarding students and three *juz* for full-day students, over three years, while day-to-day pacing is determined through the grouping of students into high, normal, and low *halaqah*, so that targets can be adjusted to individual ability without losing sight of the purpose of the *tahfidz* program. In this case, this two-axis design appears to be unevenly standardized.

While the program-track ceiling is fixed, the translation of *halaqah* level into a daily figure varied by teacher, a pattern this single case can flag but not generalize.

The implementation of memorization targets proceeds gradually and flexibly through *ziyadah*, *muraja'ah*, memorization deposits, and teacher assistance. This flexibility gives students room to meet targets in line with their developing abilities, while the quality of memorization is preserved through *muraja'ah* and improved Qur'an recitation.

Evaluation of target achievement is conducted continuously through daily, monthly, and end-of-semester assessments. It appraises not only the amount memorized but also recitation quality, *tajwid* accuracy, discipline, activeness, communication, learning completeness, and students' attitudes during the program. However, this multidimensional, process-oriented evaluation ultimately resolves into a binary achieved/not-achieved distinction on the program's completion certificate, a tension between process and outcome that schools designing similar systems may wish to consider explicitly.

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Ethical Statement

This study followed ethical principles governing research involving educational institutions and human participants. Before data collection, the author requested formal research permission from SMAIT Ulil Albab Batam through an official letter (Letter No. 0722E/UN35.6/LT/2026, dated 13 February 2026). SMAIT Ulil Albab Batam granted the permission through Official Letter No. 11.003/SMAIT-UAB/III/2026, approving the study at the school.

All procedures followed the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality. Participants and, where applicable, their legal guardians received information about the purpose of the study, and the manuscript anonymizes all participant identities to protect their privacy.

Conflict of Interest

StatementThe authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Author Contributions

Ibtihal Istiqomah: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Collection, Formal Analysis, Writing, Original Draft. Indah Muliati: Supervision, Validation, Writing, Review & Editing. Halomoan: Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing. Wirdati: Supervision, Validation, Writing, Review & Editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Declaration of Generative AI in Scientific Writing

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used generative AI tools to assist with language editing and clarity improvement of the English text. After using this tool, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the publication's content. No generative AI tool was used to generate original data, findings, analysis, or scientific conclusions presented in this work.

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