

Parental Emotional Reinforcement-Demands, and the Intrinsic Motivation of Santri in Qur'anic Memorization: A Study in Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools

Taufikin^{1✉}, Sri Nurhayati², Jahangeer Majeed³, Muhammad Afzal⁴, Habib Al-Badawi⁵, Mabrouk Chibani Mansouri⁶, Gulnaz Fatma⁷

¹Faculty of Tarbiyah, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kudus, Indonesia

²Department of Community Education, IKIP Siliwangi, Indonesia

³Faculty of Education, Aligarh Muslim University, India

⁴Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Punjab, Pakistan

⁵Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Lebanese University, Lebanon

⁶Faculty of Islamic Education, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

⁷Department of English, Jazan University, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

In Indonesia, early Qur'anic memorization is a culturally and spiritually significant practice, particularly within Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Despite its importance, limited research has examined how parent-child dynamics influence children's motivation in this context. This study investigates the motivational experiences of children aged 6 to 12 engaged in Qur'anic memorization, with particular attention to the role of parental emotional reinforcement, directive expectations, and intrinsic spiritual aspirations. A qualitative, psycho-hermeneutic approach was employed, involving interviews with one kiai, 20 ustaz-ustazah, and 23 santri who had memorized 30 Juz of the Qur'an, complemented by observations of 540 students and analysis of their monthly memorization progress reports. Findings reveal three distinct motivational trajectories: (1) extrinsic motivation through parental emotional reinforcement (e.g., praise, rewards), (2) passive compliance under parental demands, and (3) intrinsic motivation grounded in the child's spiritual calling. While extrinsic motivation often initiates engagement, intrinsic motivation is crucial for sustaining long-term memorization commitment and internalizing religious values. This study enriches theoretical understanding of motivation in Islamic education by integrating Self-Determination Theory and hermeneutic analysis. It also offers practical implications for parents, educators, and policymakers seeking to foster supportive and autonomy-enhancing environments in pesantren settings. Further research is recommended to explore how sociocultural structures and pesantren pedagogies influence the development of religious motivation among young learners.

Keywords: character education, emotional reinforcement, learning outcomes, parent-child relationship, qur'anic memorization, religious education, spiritual education.

✉ Corresponding Author:

Taufikin, Faculty of Tarbiyah, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kudus, Indonesia

Email: taufikin.sunankudus@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The process of Qur'anic memorization, particularly among children, holds profound significance within Islamic culture, serving both as a spiritual accomplishment and as a means of instilling religious identity

(Suryana et al., 2024; Syaifulloh et al., 2022). In Indonesia, pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) play a central role in shaping children's character and spirituality, primarily through Qur'anic memorization programs (tahfidz) (Jusubaidi et al., 2024;

Taufikin et al., 2025). These institutions, including those located in Central Java, provide a highly conducive environment for children (santri) to engage in intensive memorization of the Qur'an (Taufikin, 2021). Such programs encompass not only religious education but also parenting practices, moral development, and character education. Many pesantren target children aged 6 to 12 years, with the ambitious goal of completing the memorization of all 30 juz (sections) of the Qur'an by the age of 12 (Zulhannan & Musyarrofah, 2024).

Despite the abundance of research on religious motivation, limited attention has been paid to parent-child dynamics in Qur'anic memorization such as Juhana and Nurhayati (2023) which reveal parents' strategies to improve children's Qur'anic memorization. Nevertheless, most studies emphasize academic or social motivation, overlooking the parental role in shaping spiritual aspirations (Syahbudin et al., 2023). This study addresses that gap by examining how parents influence their children's motivation in the unique religious environment of pesantren. This study focuses on parent-child interactions that shape children's motivation from external regulation, such as parental demands, to intrinsic desire rooted in personal spirituality. It asks: How do parental emotional reinforcement and demands influence children's motivation to become hafiz in pesantren?

By employing a psycho-hermeneutic approach, this research endeavors to provide deeper insights into the meanings embedded within children's motivational narratives and the influence of parent-child relationships alongside the sociocultural context of the pesantren. Two primary challenges must be addressed when examining the influence of parents on children's motivation. First, how

can researchers distinguish between motivation driven by parental expectations and that which originates intrinsically within the child? Second, how can such motivation be effectively measured and analyzed within the deeply religious family and institutional settings of pesantren? To address these challenges, this study employs a qualitative methodology, allowing for an in-depth exploration of both children's and parents' perspectives on the Qur'anic memorization process. The psycho-hermeneutic framework enables a nuanced interpretation of the narratives shared by participants, taking into account the psychological and social dynamics that underpin motivational development.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that parent-child relationships play a pivotal role in shaping children's religious identity. For instance, Carbone et al. (2024) and Nurhayati (2021) found that supportive parenting styles significantly enhance children's religious identity, while authoritarian parenting often leads to psychological dissonance and internal conflict (Huang et al., 2024). Similarly, Perbowosari et al. (2025) revealed that empathetic and supportive parental approaches are more effective in fostering intrinsic motivation for religious commitment. Despite the rich literature on parenting and religious upbringing, few studies have explicitly linked parental factors to children's motivation for Qur'anic memorization, particularly within the intensely religious environment of pesantren (Bornstein et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2023).

The relevance of motivational theory in this context is underscored by prior research, especially self-determination theory, which distinguishes between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation influenced by external factors (Deci & Ryan, 2015; Ryan

& Deci, 2020). This theoretical perspective offers a valuable lens for analyzing motivation within Islamic educational frameworks and is highly applicable to the aims of this study.

A review of the relevant literature reveals that most previous research focuses on children's motivation in general educational contexts, with limited attention to memorization-specific or religiously embedded settings. Existing studies tend to prioritize the academic or social aspects of parenting, while the religious dimension particularly within pesantren tahfidz remains underexplored. This research gap underscores the need for a more targeted investigation into parent-child relationships within the specific context of religious education, such as Qur'anic memorization.

Accordingly, this study addresses a focused question: How do parental emotional reinforcement and demands shape children's intrinsic motivation to memorize the Qur'an in pesantren? Despite growing attention to children's motivation in religious education, a significant gap persists concerning how parent-child relationships influence motivation in Qur'anic memorization, especially within pesantren. Most studies either overlook the familial role in shaping religious motivation or focus solely on general educational settings. Few have explored the intricate relationship between family dynamics and religious institutions. Moreover, this study highlights the importance of distinguishing intrinsic from extrinsic motivation in shaping religious commitment an area rarely examined in tahfidz settings. Focusing on Tahfidz Pesantren in Pati, Central Java, this study explores motivational dynamics using a psycho-hermeneutic approach, contributing both to motivational theory and pedagogical practice in religious education.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative methodology, utilizing a psycho-hermeneutic approach, to explore the meanings and motivations embedded in the experiences of students (santri) memorizing the Qur'an in a pesantren (Islamic boarding school). This approach was selected to enable the researcher to investigate the subjective experiences of the santri thoroughly and to understand how parental relationships and the sociocultural dynamics of the pesantren influence the development of children's religious motivation.

a. Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative research design with a phenomenological lens to investigate the lived experiences and perceptions of the santri concerning their motivation to memorize the Qur'an. This design was chosen to yield rich insights into the personal journeys of the students and the underlying factors influencing their motivational processes (Creswell, 2018; Iswahyudi et al., 2023). The focus was on how parental influence, intrinsic motivation, and the pesantren environment contribute to the student's commitment to the tahfidz (memorization) program (Khan, 2022; Suddick et al., 2020).

b. Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at the Children's Tahfidzul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School (PPATQ) Raudlatul Falah in Pati, Central Java. This pesantren hosts 540 students of various age groups engaged in an intensive Qur'anic memorization program. Observations were conducted across the entire student body, with particular emphasis on children aged 6 to 12 years. To gain deeper insights, interviews were carried out with one cleric (kiai), 20

teachers (ustaz and ustazah), 13 students, and 10 parents whose children had successfully memorized all 30 juz of the Qur'an. The interviewed students were selected from grades 4, 5, and 6, as they were considered to have attained a certain maturity level in the memorization process. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that informants had relevant experience with Qur'anic memorization and parent-child dynamics. The selection aimed to balance perspectives across age, role, and experience.

c. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through several key methods: observation, interviews, and documentation (Galily, 2024; Nightingale, 2020). Observations were conducted on the whole student cohort to understand the social interactions within the pesantren. The researcher documented students' daily activities, their engagement with caregivers, and their involvement in Qur'anic memorization routines. Interview guides were designed based on themes from motivation theory. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Kiai, 20 teachers, and 23 students who had completed memorizing the Qur'an. The interview questions were designed to explore their motivations, parental influence, and the challenges they encountered throughout the process. Additionally, documentation was used to supplement this information, including monthly progress charts that recorded each student's memorization development. Monthly memorization charts provided objective tracking data to triangulate qualitative insights.

d. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis within a hermeneutic framework. The process began with

transcribing interviews and observational notes to identify emerging themes. These themes were then further analyzed to interpret the underlying meanings of each student's experience and to understand the roles of parents and pesantren in shaping motivation. Thematic analysis was conducted in three phases: open coding to identify initial concepts, axial coding to group patterns, and selective coding to extract key themes. Themes were interpreted hermeneutically in relation to motivational theory and pesantren culture. Iterative coding and memo-writing ensured analytic rigor and theoretical integration. Hermeneutic analysis was employed to contextualize the social, cultural, and psychological factors that influenced the children's experiences. The researcher employed an iterative analytic process, revisiting the data to ensure the validity and alignment of findings with the participants' subjective realities.

e. Validity and Research Ethics

To ensure the study's validity, data triangulation was employed by integrating findings from observations, interviews, and documentation of monthly progress charts. This triangulation enabled the researcher to verify the results from multiple sources and perspectives. The study adhered to rigorous ethical standards. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the pesantren and all participants. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and assured that their data would be kept confidential and anonymous. They were also given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions (Quintão et al., 2020). In addition to ensure credibility, the study employed peer debriefing, and member checking. Ethical approval was secured, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and

voluntary participation were maintained throughout the research process. Through this methodological framework, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing children's motivation to memorize the Qur'an in pesantren settings, as well as the roles that parental relationships and institutional environments play in fostering their religious development.

3. Result and Discussion

Thematic analysis revealed three central themes related to children's motivation to memorize the Qur'an: emotional

encouragement through parental support, passive compliance under directive expectations, and intrinsic aspiration with spiritual meaning construction.

a. Parental Emotional Reinforcement-Demands as an Emotional Investment

The first theme highlights how parental emotional reinforcement through praise, gifts, and storytelling encouraged children to begin their Qur'anic memorization. This form of support served as a motivational foundation, boosting children's confidence and early engagement.

Table 1. Interview Findings: Parental Emotional Reinforcement as Emotional Investment

Informants	Frequency	Key Statements	Interpretation
5 Santri, Grade 6 th	4	"I want to make my mother proud and earn Allah's reward."	Motivation is driven by a desire to meet parental expectations (extrinsic).
6 santri, Grade 5 th	5	"My parents give me gifts whenever I reach a memorization target."	Rewards serve as a form of appreciation, reinforcing memory.
4 Teachers	6	"Children are more enthusiastic when praised by their parents after reaching a goal."	Praise functions as emotional encouragement, strengthening commitment.

Table 1 presents the interview findings related to parental emotional reinforcement and its role as a form of emotional investment in children's memorization process. The responses from students and teachers indicate that parental involvement, whether through expectations, rewards, or praise, significantly shapes children's motivation and persistence. For example, students reported that their memorization efforts were closely tied to the desire to fulfill parental expectations and attain spiritual rewards, suggesting that extrinsic motivation plays a central role in sustaining their commitment. Similarly, the provision of tangible rewards, such as gifts, functioned as a recognition of achievement, further reinforcing the memorization process (Rakhmah et al., 2024). Teachers emphasized that verbal praise and encouragement from parents enhanced chil-

dren's enthusiasm and willingness to engage more deeply with their learning. Taken together, these findings highlight that parental emotional reinforcement operates both as extrinsic motivation and as a source of emotional support, thereby strengthening children's dedication and consistency in memorization activities.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of parental emotional reinforcement as identified in the interview data. It demonstrates how different forms of reinforcement expectations, rewards, and praise serve as mechanisms of emotional investment that contribute to children's motivation and learning outcomes. The figure emphasizes the interconnected nature of these reinforcements, showing how they collectively foster both emotional

encouragement and behavioral persistence in the memorization process

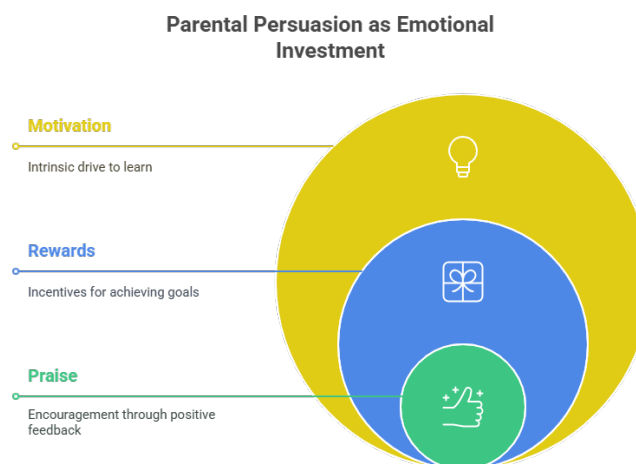


Figure 1. Parental Emotional Reinforcement

Most santri respondents reported that parental emotional reinforcement manifested through praise, rewards, and moral stories served as extrinsic motivators to initiate

memorization. This finding aligns with the concept of external regulation in Self-Determination Theory.

Table 2. Frequency of Parental Emotional Reinforcement in Motivation

Theme	Informants	Frequency	Interpretation
Parental demands as Emotional Investment	13 santri, 10 parents, 20 teachers	15	Children often feel motivated to memorize the Qur'an in order to please their parents and receive praise. Parents provide both material and spiritual rewards.

Many students expressed pride when their parents acknowledged their efforts in memorization. One student noted, "Every time I complete a juz, my mother gives me a gift. That makes me excited to continue." Teachers echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that parental praise played a vital role in sustaining children's motivation.

memorization. Several students admitted entering the pesantren without full consent or personal desire. Familial demands and parental expectations were the primary drivers. Children in this category often felt obligated and initially displayed resistance. Over time, however, they began to adapt to the pesantren environment.

b. Parental Demands and Passive Compliance

The second theme identified was parental demands from parents and children's passive compliance in Qur'anic

Table 3. Interview Findings: Parental Demands and Passive Compliance

Informants	Frequency	Key Statements	Interpretation
5 santri, Grade 4 th	3	"I did not want to go to pesantren, but my parents forced me."	Parental Demands as an external motivator.
4 Teachers	5	"Some students were unhappy at first, but they adjusted after a few months."	Passive compliance arises from fear of disappointing parents by not meeting the parents' demands.
6 santri, Grade 5 th	2	"I felt forced to memorize, but now I feel more comfortable."	Gradual adaptation to permanent rules is initially perceived as burdensome.

Table 3 outlines the interview findings concerning parental demands and the resulting patterns of passive compliance among students. The statements from students and teachers reveal that parental authority often functions as an external motivator that initially generates resistance or discomfort. Several students expressed that their enrollment in pesantren or engagement in memorization activities was not entirely voluntary, but rather a consequence of parental insistence.

This sense of obligation reflects the role of parental demands as a controlling influence in shaping children's educational trajectories. Teachers noted that although some students showed reluctance at the outset, they gradually adjusted over time, suggesting a process of adaptation to the institutional environment and expectations (Asrial et al., 2023). Furthermore, students reported that

while memorization initially felt forced and burdensome, over time it became normalized and more manageable, indicating a shift from external pressure toward internalized acceptance.

These findings illustrate how passive compliance emerges not from intrinsic motivation but from fear of disappointing parents and the gradual habituation to established rules. Figure 2 depicts the dynamics of parental demands and their influence on students' passive compliance. It illustrates the trajectory from initial resistance to gradual adjustment, highlighting how external parental pressure leads to compliance rooted in obligation rather than intrinsic motivation. The figure emphasizes the transitional process in which students, though initially reluctant, adapt to the structural and emotional demands imposed by their parents, thereby normalizing compliance over time.

Understanding Passive Compliance in Pesantren Education

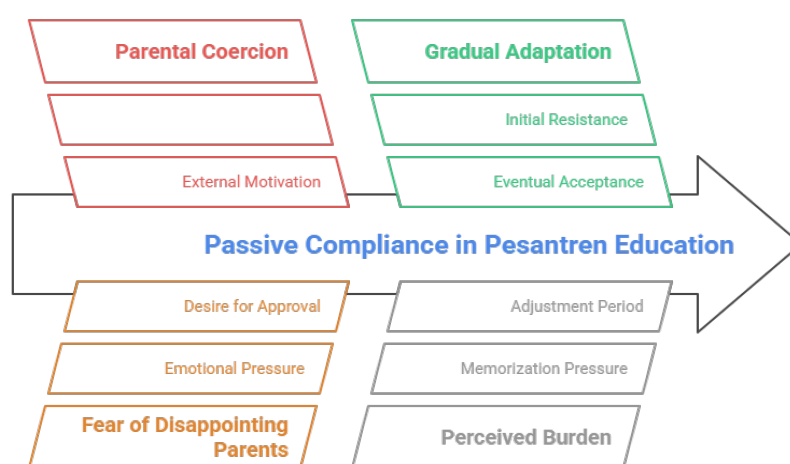


Figure 2. Parental Demands and Passive Compliance

Though parental demands often leads to passive compliance, it can cause psychological dissonance in children not intrinsically motivated to pursue tahfidz. Despite initial resistance, most children

eventually adapted, leading to passive memorization. This highlights the importance of striking a balance between external parental demands and internal motivation in religious education.

Table 4. Parental demands and Passive Compliance in Memorization

Theme	Informants	Frequency	Interpretation
Parental demands and Passive Compliance	8 santri, five parents, 10 teachers	10	Some children entered the pesantren under parental demands. Initial resistance was common but decreased over time as they became accustomed to it.

Some children described feeling pressured into memorizing the Quran due to high parental demands. One student remarked, "At first, I did not want to enter the pesantren, but my parents insisted. Eventually, I got used to it and started feeling more comfortable." Despite the reluctance, these students began to accept Qur'anic memorization as a meaningful part of their identity.

c. Self-Will and Meaning Formation

The third theme was the presence of personal aspirations and more profound meaning-making among students. Several students expressed that their motivation stemmed not from parental demands but from an internal desire. Inspired by religious figures or spiritual dreams, they felt a personal calling to become hafiz (one who has memorized the Qur'an).

Table 5. Interview Findings: Personal Aspiration and Meaning Construction

Informants	Frequency	Key Statements	Interpretation
6 santri, Grade 6 th	5	"I want to be a <i>hafiz</i> like my <i>kiai</i> and gain Allah's blessings."	Intrinsic motivation inspired by religious role models.
5 santri, Grade 5 th	4	"I feel that memorizing the Qur'an is my life's calling."	Personal desire motivated by a spiritual calling.
5 Teachers	4	"Self-motivated children are usually more focused and spiritually mature."	Intrinsic motivation leads to more profound commitment.

Table 5 presents interview findings that underscore the significance of personal aspiration and meaning construction in the memorization of the Qur'an. Unlike external motivators such as parental reinforcement or demands, these responses highlight intrinsic motivation rooted in individual spiritual goals and self-determination. Students expressed aspirations to emulate religious role models, particularly their *kiai*, and to pursue the status of a hafiz as a path toward divine blessings. Others described memorization as a personal vocation, reflecting a profound sense of spiritual calling and purpose.

Teachers supported these perspectives by noting that students driven by internal aspirations display greater focus, discipline, and spiritual maturity. These findings suggest that intrinsic motivation emerging from personal aspiration and meaning construction fosters a deeper and more enduring commitment to memorization, contrasting with the temporary compliance produced by external pressures.

Figure 3 illustrates the role of personal aspiration and meaning making in motivating Qur'anic memorization. It demonstrates how intrinsic factors such as spiritual vocation,

religious role models, and a sense of personal mission contribute to sustained engagement and commitment. The figure emphasizes the transformative aspect of intrinsic mo-

tivation, showing how meaning construction not only sustains perseverance but also nurtures spiritual maturity and a deeper sense of purpose in the memorization process.

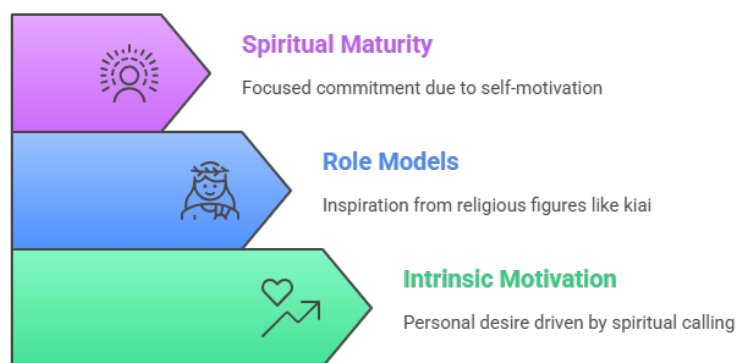


Figure 3. Personal Aspiration and Meaning Construction

Students with intrinsic motivation exhibited greater engagement and spiritual depth in memorizing the Qur'an. They saw it as a spiritual vocation rather than an

obligation, emphasizing the importance of integrating religious values into the memorization process to foster a robust religious identity.

Table 6. Findings on Personal Motivation to Become Hafidz

Theme	Informants	Frequency	Interpretation
Personal Aspiration and Meaning Construction	13 santri, five parents, 10 teachers	12	Students reported a personal desire to become <i>hafidz</i> , inspired by religious mentors or spiritual experiences.

Many students reported being inspired by religious figures or significant spiritual events. One remarked, "I want to be like my teacher; he memorized all 30 juz. It made me believe I could do it, too." This motivation often stemmed from faith and spiritual commitment, resulting in a stronger religious identity.

d. Observational Findings

Observations indicated that most students memorized the Qur'an diligently,

although motivation levels varied. Intrinsically motivated students were more focused and committed, whereas those driven by external factors required continuous reinforcement. Monthly progress reports documented notable increases in the number of students reaching the 30 juz target by age 12, although memorization speed differed between internally and externally motivated students.

Table 7. Observational and Documentation Findings

Category	Number of Students	Percentage Completing 30 Juz	Average Duration	Interpretation
Intrinsic Motivation	12	80%	3 years	Internally motivated students completed memorization more quickly.
Extrinsic Motivation	11	40%	4 years	Externally motivated students required more time and reinforcement.

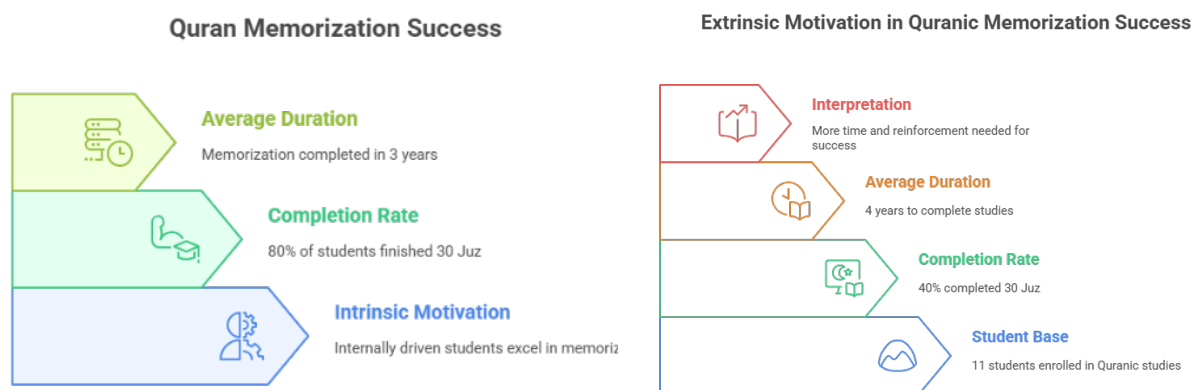


Figure 4. Motivation in Qur'anic Success

Table 7 presents observational and documentation data comparing students' Qur'anic memorization outcomes based on different sources of motivation. The findings indicate a clear distinction between intrinsically and extrinsically motivated students in terms of both completion rates and duration of study. Among students driven by intrinsic motivation, 80% successfully completed the memorization of 30 juz within an average of three years, demonstrating higher efficiency and consistency.

In contrast, only 40% of extrinsically motivated students reached completion, and the average duration extended to four years. These results suggest that intrinsic motivation provides a stronger and more sustainable foundation for memorization, allowing students to progress more effectively with less reliance on external reinforcement. By contrast, extrinsic motivators appear to require continual reinforcement and lead to slower progress, underscoring the importance of cultivating internalized aspirations in the process of Qur'anic learning.

Figure 4 visualizes the comparative outcomes of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in Qur'anic memorization. It highlights the differences in completion rates and timeframes, illustrating how intrinsic motivation significantly accelerates the memorization process and leads to higher levels of achievement.

The figure underscores the pivotal role of internalized goals and personal aspiration in sustaining long-term success, while also demonstrating the limitations of extrinsic reinforcement when detached from deeper personal commitment.

e. Monthly Documentation

Graphical documentation of monthly progress reports offered additional insights into Qur'anic memorization trends. Students with intrinsic motivation (either parent-supported or self-driven) showed faster progress, while those subjected to Parental demands or external parental demands were slower. These findings underscore the importance of fostering internal motivation for optimal outcomes.

In summary, the study found that a combination of internal and external factors shapes children's motivation to memorize the Qur'an. Parental influence whether through Parental emotional reinforcement or Parental demands plays a significant role; however, intrinsic motivation, rooted in personal desire, has a more substantial and lasting impact.

f. Quantitative Summary of Motivational Trends

To further substantiate the thematic findings, this study includes quantitative summaries drawn from coded interview responses.

es and observational documentation. These summaries offer clearer insight into the distribution and impact of different motivational drivers. This distribution highlights the prevalence of extrinsic and directive parental influence in initiating memorization, with a significant proportion of children also

demonstrating intrinsic aspiration. Table 9 shows that children motivated intrinsically achieved faster and more complete memorization. These quantitative findings reinforce the qualitative narratives regarding the importance of intrinsic motivation for sustained success in tahfidz education.

Table 8. Frequency Distribution of Motivational Themes

Motivational Theme	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample (%)
Parental Emotional Reinforcement (extrinsic motivation)	15	37.5%
Parental Demands / Authoritative Expectations (introjected)	10	25.0%
Intrinsic Spiritual Aspiration	12	30.0%

Table 8 summarizes the distribution of motivational themes identified across the sample, providing an overview of the relative prevalence of different drivers of Qur'anic memorization. The findings reveal that parental emotional reinforcement, classified as extrinsic motivation, was the most frequently reported theme, accounting for 37.5% of responses.

Parental demands and authoritative expectations, categorized as introjected motivation, represented 25% of the sample, reflecting the significant role of parental authority in shaping students' compliance and adjustment. Meanwhile, intrinsic spiritual aspiration, reported by 30% of respondents, underscores the importance of internalized goals and personal meaning-making as a motiva-

tional source. The distribution suggests that while external influences, particularly from parents, remain central to students' engagement, intrinsic spiritual motivation plays a substantial role in sustaining long-term commitment and resilience.

Table 9 presents the relationship between different types of motivation and students' Qur'anic memorization outcomes. By comparing intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations, the table highlights differences in both the efficiency of memorization (average completion time) and overall success rates. This outcome-oriented data complements the thematic distribution shown in Table 8, offering a clearer picture of how motivational sources directly impact learning trajectories and achievements.

Table 9. Qur'anic Memorization Outcomes by Motivation Type

Motivation Type	Students (n)	Avg. Completion Time (Years)	Completion Rate (30 Juz)
Intrinsic	12	3	80%
Extrinsic	11	4	40%

This chapter presents the study's findings on children's motivation to memorize the Qur'an at the Al-Tahfidzul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School (PPATQ) Raudlatul Falah in Pati, Central Java. These findings are based on interviews with

students, parents, and teachers, as well as direct observation of all students and monthly progress documentation. The analysis is situated within the frameworks of Deci & Ryan's Self-Determination Theory and Ricoeur's hermeneutics, but also

critically evaluates the cultural limitations of applying Western theories in Islamic Indonesian settings.

g. The Influence of Parent-Child Relationships on Qur'anic Memorization Motivation

The study revealed that parent-child relationships play a crucial role in shaping children's motivation to memorize the Qur'an. However, the application of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) requires critical consideration. In Western SDT, autonomy is central to motivation development (Deci & Ryan, 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2020). In contrast, this study finds that religious motivation often begins with relational expectations and collective duty elements that SDT tends to categorize as less autonomous. Yet, these externally regulated behaviors often evolve into spiritually grounded commitment in pesantren culture, suggesting a culturally specific pathway to intrinsic motivation.

The findings also highlighted a motivational gap between students driven by extrinsic factors and those who were intrinsically motivated. This confirms [Abubakar et al \(2023\)](#), [Guo \(2018\)](#) and [Trovao \(2017\)](#) assertion that intrinsic motivation fosters psychological resilience and long-term commitment. While parents can be powerful motivators, reflective personal desire proves to be a more enduring source of motivation.

h. Parental Emotional Encouragement as Emotional Investment

Many children enrolled in the Qur'anic memorization program were encouraged by parents through praise and rewards. While this aligns with [Deci & Ryan \(2015\)](#) SDT's model of extrinsic motivation, it may underestimate the role of emotional and

spiritual identification in religious cultures. In our findings, students did not merely respond to stimuli but interpreted parental rewards as signs of divine approval. This nuanced religious framing of extrinsic rewards challenges the rigid SDT continuum.

Interviews and observations revealed that children who received praise or gifts felt valued, which boosted their confidence and encouraged greater effort. One student shared, "Every time I complete a juz, my mother gives me a gift. That makes me excited to continue." This suggests that parental emotional reinforcement serves as an emotional investment, thereby strengthening children's motivation and commitment. In this context, parents act as social agents influencing their children's behavior through emotional stimulation ([Savary & Goldsmith, 2020](#); [Susewind & Walkowitz, 2020](#)). However, while extrinsic motivation can be compelling initially, stronger intrinsic motivation is required to sustain long-term goals, such as becoming a hafiz.

i. Parental demands and Passive Compliance

The study found that directive parenting often initiated memorization. While SDT warns that such pressure undermines autonomy, our data reveal a more complex trajectory: students initially comply out of obligation but later reframe their actions as spiritually meaningful. This transition is better explained through Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity, where duty evolves into chosen religious identity ([Sidorova, 2024](#)). Hence, pressure may serve as a transitional stage in identity internalization rather than a purely controlling force.

Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory warns that external parental demands can hinder the development of intrinsic

motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Despite this, some children who began with reluctance later found personal meaning in the practice, transforming their motivation. This highlights the dynamic nature of parent-child relationships, which can evolve from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic commitment as children internalize the value of Qur'anic memorization.

j. Personal Aspiration and Meaning Construction

Intrinsic motivation emerged as a vital theme. Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory helps explain this shift. Children construct meaning through narrative emplotment drawing on spiritual role models to reconfigure their life story. Their intrinsic motivation is thus less about self-expression and more about theological alignment, challenging secular interpretations of autonomy.

From a hermeneutic perspective (Ricoeur, 1976) Qur'anic memorization can be viewed as an interpretive process in which children integrate religious values into their lives (Garcia, 2025; Kearney, 2017). These children did not approach memorization as a

duty but as a spiritual journey. They associated the practice with spiritual and personal fulfillment, which reinforced their long-term commitment to it. For example, one student shared, "I want to be like my teacher; he memorized all 30 juz. That made me believe I could do it, too". The findings suggest that intrinsic motivation promotes a more profound, reflective religious identity. Motivation driven by personal spiritual aspirations enhances children's ability to remain committed despite external parental demands.

k. The Gap Between Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation

A key finding of this study is the significant divergence between extrinsic motivation, driven by parental influence, and intrinsic motivation, which stems from within the child. However, we caution against a binary view. In the pesantren context, extrinsic and intrinsic motivations often overlap and reinforce one another. Rather than a strict continuum, motivation may be best understood as a layered structure shaped by obedience, aspiration, and evolving meaning.

Table 10. Comparison of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation

Type of Motivation	Participant Frequency	Impact on Qur'anic Memorization
Extrinsic Motivation	15 students	Increases initial motivation but tends to diminish over time.
Intrinsic Motivation	8 students	Enhances long-term commitment and resilience in the face of challenges.

l. Practical and Policy Implications

The findings have several implications for parents, educators, and policymakers. Importantly, policy must reflect the cultural-religious realities of pesantren rather than importing Western autonomy-focused models uncritically. For parents, it is essential to align their approach with their child's emotional readiness and autonomy.

Empathetic and supportive parenting is more effective in cultivating intrinsic motivation. Educators should create opportunities for children to develop personal aspirations in Qur'anic memorization. Policymakers should design education policies that support the formation of religious identity while considering the sociocultural factors that influence children's motivation.

m. Novel Contributions of This Study

This study makes a significant contribution by demonstrating that motivation in Islamic education requires theoretical frameworks that integrate relational ethics, religious authority, and spiritual interpretation dimensions underexplored in mainstream educational psychology. Moreover, the novelty of this study also lies in its identification of three interactive motivational types within the *tahfidz* pesantren context: extrinsic

motivation (parental emotional reinforcement), passive extrinsic motivation (Parental demands), and intrinsic motivation (personal desire). The study provides new insights into how parent-child relationships and pesantren sociocultural dynamics contribute to the formation of children's religious motivation (Prayitno et al., 2019). These findings enhance our understanding of how external motivation can evolve into a more profound commitment to religious practice.

Table 11. Novel Contributions of the Study

Key Findings	Research Contribution
Parental demands as an emotional investment	Highlights the significance of extrinsic motivation in religious contexts
Impact of Parental demands and passive compliance	Reveals long-term effects of Parental demands on religious motivation
Personal desire and meaning-making	Integrates hermeneutic theory into understanding intrinsic motivation

Table 11 outlines the novel contributions generated by the study, demonstrating how its findings extend existing scholarship on Qur'anic memorization and motivation. The first contribution lies in identifying parental demands as a form of emotional investment, thereby emphasizing the role of extrinsic motivation within religious educational contexts. This perspective enriches the understanding of how external factors, particularly familial expectations, serve not only as constraints but also as structured sources of support that shape students' persistence.

Secondly, the study highlights the enduring influence of parental demands and passive compliance, showing that while initially experienced as pressure, such demands may evolve into long-term motivators that sustain religious practice and discipline.

Finally, the study integrates hermeneutic theory into the analysis of personal desire and meaning-making, offering a novel inter-

pretive framework for understanding intrinsic motivation. This theoretical integration provides a more nuanced account of how individual aspirations and spiritual interpretation contribute to profound commitment in memorization practices.

Figure 5 visually represents the key contributions of the study, illustrating how the findings advance theoretical and practical understandings of motivation in Qur'anic memorization. It highlights the interplay between extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions, as well as the integration of hermeneutic insights, thereby underscoring the study's originality in linking parental influence, compliance, and personal aspiration within a unified framework of religious motivation.

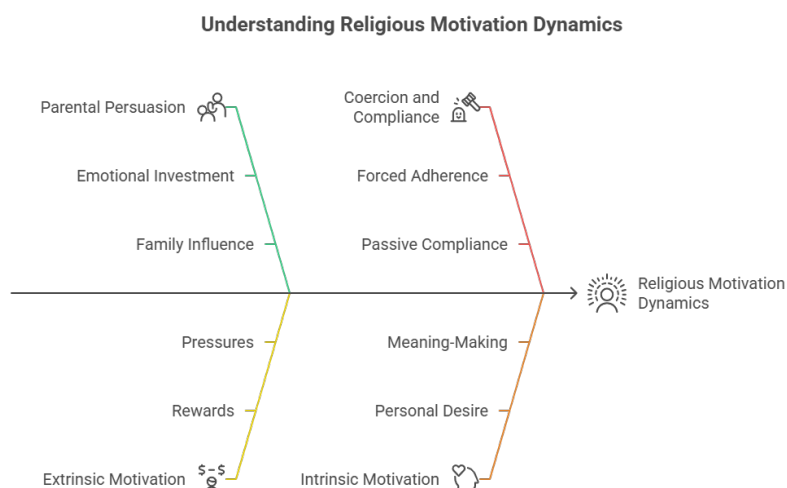


Figure 5. Novel Contributions

This study makes a significant contribution to understanding motivation in religious education, specifically within the context of Qur'anic memorization in pesantren. By integrating psychological and hermeneutic theories, the study suggests that to facilitate deeper motivational development, it is essential to allow children the space to discover personal meaning in their religious educational journey.

4. Conclusion

This study examined the multifaceted motivational structures underlying children's engagement in Qur'anic memorization at the Al-Tahfidzul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School (PPATQ) Raudlatul Falah, located in Pati, Central Java. Emphasizing the dynamic interface between parental involvement and the spectrum of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational drives, the findings demonstrate that while parental incentives such as praise and material rewards serve as effective catalysts for initiating the memorization process, enduring engagement is more robustly anchored in the child's internally constructed spiritual aspirations. The analysis interrogates the adequacy of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) in capturing this phenomenon, suggesting that its

autonomy-centric paradigm necessitates contextual recalibration when applied to the socio-religious ethos of pesantren settings, where obedience, relational interdependence, and theological interiority are foundational. The study yields actionable implications across multiple educational strata. It advocates a pedagogical reorientation for parents, urging them to transition from authoritative figures to spiritual guides who cultivate intrinsic motivation through emotionally resonant and theologically grounded narratives. For educators, it necessitates the development of reflective pedagogies that not only facilitate rote memorization but also encourage students to articulate personal meaning within the Qur'anic tradition. At the policy level, the findings call for a reconfiguration of Islamic education curricula that integrates structured memorization with opportunities for narrative construction and spiritual self-articulation, ensuring alignment with the lived religiosity and moral formation of santri. By situating Qur'anic memorization within a composite framework that encompasses religious authority, communal identity, and Ricoeurian hermeneutics, this research proposes a culturally embedded theory of motivation. It challenges the

universality of Western motivational schemas and posits that enduring religious commitment emerges through narrative appropriation, intersubjective relationality, and spiritual telos dimensions largely marginalized in prevailing psychological models. Despite its contributions, the study acknowledges certain limitations. Its concentration on a single pesantren constrains the generalizability of the findings to broader Indonesian Islamic educational contexts. Future research should undertake comparative ethnographic analyses across diverse pesantren typologies to elucidate how regional, institutional, and theological variations mediate motivational development. Moreover, further inquiry into the affective labor of pesantren caregivers and the performative dimensions of religious rituals is essential to comprehensively map the motivational ecology of Qur'anic memorization.

5. References

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