Leadership Strategy of Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Poncowati in Improving the Qur'anic Memorization Quality of *Tahfidz* Students

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Abstract
This study investigates the method used by the leadership of the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Poncowati Islamic Boarding School (MBS) to improve the students' memorization of the Qur'an through the *tahfidz* coaching program. The research started from the fact that the number of *tahfidz* institutions has increased, but it has not been fully accompanied by an improvement in the quality of memorization (*mutqin*) of students. This study uses a descriptive qualitative methodology with a case study design. The informants in this study included *pesantren* leaders, *tahfidz ustadz*, and students, who were selected purposively. Analysis, observation, and documentation are methods of data collection, and triangulation ensures the validity of the data. The research found five key components of a leadership strategy: a planned *tahfidz* curriculum; the implementation of routine coaching through Subuh, *Muraja'ah* Sore, and *Tasmi' Pekanan* deposits; the use of technology to monitor memorization; tiered evaluation; and moral and spiritual strengthening through gifts and examples. Improving the quality of students' memorization and forming a sustainable Qur'anic habitus are two goals that this approach has successfully achieved. This study supports the theory of Islamic education management and *pesantren* leadership and provides a strategic model that can be applied by other *tahfidz* institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an is the main source of Islamic teachings that is a guideline for all Muslims (Adona et al., 2024; Siti Naila Aziba et al., 2024). Efforts to maintain the purity of the Qur'an, both in writing (*rasm*) and memorization (*hifz*), have been carried out since the time of the Prophet PBUH and continue to be preserved until now (Hifni, 2023; Yanti et al., 2024). The tradition of memorizing the Qur'an (*tahfidz*) not only has high spiritual value, but also plays an important role in maintaining the continuity of Islamic sciences (Amelia & Siti Maryam Ulfa, 2024; Nazopah, 2024). The memorizers of the Qur'an (*hafiz/hafizah*) have a respectable position in society because they are considered the guardians of the revelation of Allah SWT (Huda, 2018; Nafi et al., 2019). Therefore, Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia place the *tahfidz* program as an integral part in forming a generation of Qur'ani who have noble character and extensive knowledge. In the context of the development of modern Islamic education, the *tahfidz* program is not only seen as a spiritual activity, but also as an instrument of character formation, increased concentration, and strengthening the memory of students

(Marwah et al., 2023; Saputra et al., 2023) . Therefore, improving the quality of memorization is the main focus of today's Islamic educational institutions.

Historically, Islamic boarding schools have played a role as the main institution in the dissemination of religious knowledge and the moral development of Muslims (Eva Nurazizah et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2023) . In the current context, *pesantren* are not only a place to learn religion, but also a forum for character development through superior programs such as *tahfidz* Al-Qur'an. The public's interest in sending their children to Islamic boarding schools that have *tahfidz* programs shows a significant increase (Islakhudin & Astutik, 2024; Tasman Firdaus & Romi Yilhas, 2024) . Based on data from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, the number of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia increased from 31,384 institutions in 2021 to 39,544 in 2023 with more than 4.8 million students (Marhamah et al., 2024; Sakdiah, 2024). The paradigm change of *pesantren* from a traditional system to a modern system encourages *pesantren* leaders to adopt a more structured and adaptive managerial strategy to the needs of the times (Dacholfany et al., 2024; Darwanto et al., 2024; Muhardi, 2025) . Most of these Islamic boarding schools make *tahfidz* a flagship program that is expected to be able to produce a generation of quality Qur'an memorizers (Faruq, 2025; Musthofa & Khotimah, 2023) .

However, the increase in the number of *tahfidz* educational institutions has not been fully accompanied by an improvement in the quality of student memorization. Many students have completed the memorization of 30 juz, but have not reached a strong level of memorization (*mutqin*). Problems such as easy forgetfulness, difficulty in continuing the verse, and lack of understanding of the meaning of the memorized verses indicate that there is a gap between the quantitative target (the number of memorization) and the qualitative achievement (strength and comprehension of memorization) (Istikomah & Syukroni, 2025; Sabiruddin et al., 2021; Yusuf et al., 2025) . This situation demands an effective management and leadership system so that the *tahfidz* program not only produces many memorizers, but also quality (Siregar & Diana, 2024; Suryadi, 2024) . Therefore, Islamic boarding school leaders are needed who have a targeted and sustainable memorization management strategy to help students achieve a strong level of memorization (*mutqin*). However, there have not been many studies that highlight the role of *pesantren* leaders in *tahfidz* development strategies; Most previous research has focused only on memorization methods such as *talaqqi, muraja'ah, or tikrar* (Akhsanudin, 2024; Gafur et al., 2025; Istiqomah et al., 2024; Mahbengi et al., 2023; Yuri et al., 2023).

Leadership has a very strategic position in determining the direction of the success of educational programs in *pesantren* (Rifa'i & Sufyan, 2024; Yusra, n.d.). A leader not only functions as an administrative manager, but also as a vision director, system former, and driver of all elements of the institution to work synergistically. In the context of *tahfidz* coaching, *pesantren* leaders must have a clear and measurable strategy, including curriculum planning, the application of innovative coaching methods, a continuous evaluation system, and a mechanism to motivate ustadz and students to remain *istiqamah* in the memorization process (Darmansyah et al., 2024; Reyhan Fachrizal et al., 2023). However, without a visionary and planned leadership strategy, the *tahfidz* program has the potential to be stagnant and only emphasizes the quantity aspect rather than the quality of memorization. This is in

line with transformational leadership theory that emphasizes the importance of vision, motivation, and example in moving organizational members (Abdul Sahid et al., 2023; CHIŞ-MANOLACHE, 2022). In the context of Islamic education, this concept can be associated with charismatic and spiritual leadership based on Qur'anic values (Faizah, 2021; Gunawan et al., 2024; Hakim & Zahra, 2024).

One Islamic educational institution that demonstrates serious commitment to the development of *tahfidz* (Qur'anic memorization) is Pondok *Pesantren* Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Poncowati. This *pesantren* has a flagship program aimed at producing students who memorize the Qur'an proficiently. The selection of MBS Poncowati as the research site is based on its distinctive characteristics as a modern Muhammadiyah-based boarding school that integrates formal education with a structured *tahfidz* program.

However, based on preliminary observations, there remains a gap between the memorization targets set by the institution and the actual achievements of the students. This discrepancy indicates the need for more effective leadership strategies in managing and implementing the *tahfidz* program to ensure that institutional goals can be achieved optimally.

This study aims to analyze the strategy of the leadership of the MBS Poncowati Islamic Boarding School in improving the quality of students' memorization of the Qur'an through the *tahfidz* coaching program. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the literature on Islamic education management, especially in the context of *pesantren* leadership strategies. Practically, the results of this research can be a reference for other *tahfidz* institutions in developing an effective and sustainable memorization coaching model. This research is also a differentiator from the previous study because it focuses on the analysis of the strategy of *pesantren* leaders in the context of developing the quality of student memorization.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand phenomena in depth in a natural context (Sugiyono, 2019). Qualitative research focuses on participants' meaning, process, and subjective understanding of an event. In this study, the researcher plays the role of the main instrument that is directly involved in the process of data collection and analysis.

The research was conducted at the Muhammadiyah Modern Islamic Boarding School (MBS) Poncowati, Central Lampung Regency. This location was chosen because it has a superior *tahfidz* Al-Qur'an program that is the focus of observation. The research subjects were determined using the purposive sampling technique, which is the deliberate selection of informants based on certain criteria relevant to the research objectives. The research subjects consisted of Islamic boarding school leaders, *tahfidz* supervisors, and several students who were actively involved in the memorization coaching program. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation of *tahfidz* coaching activities that take place in the *pesantren* environment.

To ensure data validity, this study refers to four validity criteria according to (Lincoln & GUBA, 1985), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is achieved through triangulation of sources, methods, and time to ensure the

validity of the information obtained. Transferability is maintained by presenting detailed contextual descriptions so that the research results can be applied to similar situations. Dependability is achieved through consistency of procedures during the research process, while confirmability is achieved by maintaining the objectivity of the researcher and ensuring that findings are based on empirical data, not personal interpretation. All data obtained is analyzed and verified repeatedly to ensure the consistency of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that the strategy of the leadership of the MBS Poncowati Islamic Boarding School to improve the quality of students' memorization of the Qur'an was built through a combination of systematic planning, disciplined coaching organization, and the formation of Qur'anic culture based on example. Interviews with Islamic boarding school leaders show that the *tahfidz* program has become the identity of the institution since its inception. The leader states: *"We want MBS not only to produce students who memorize a lot, but also those who are mutqin. So we start from the preparation of targets, schedules, and evaluation standards"* (Interview, 8 November 2025). It is explained in this statement that the orientation of the program is not only quantitative but also qualitative based on the principle of quality assurance in Islamic education.

The planning process can be seen from the *tahfidz* guidance document which states the minimum memorization target each semester, the division of groups for *tahfidz* activities, and the daily coaching schedule. From the results of the researcher's observations, students participated in *tahfidz* activities regularly: submitting their memorization results after Fajr, carrying out muraja'ah in the afternoon, and participating in tasmi' pekanan which was guided directly by the supervisory ustadz. One of the ustadz conveyed : *"Children are used to it, if Fajr does not deposit, it feels like something is missing"* (Interview, 8 November 2025). This shows that *pesantren* have succeeded in developing sustainable habitus (religious habits). This is in line with the theory of habituation in Islamic education.

On the other hand, the strategy to implement the program is also carried out with an individual approach. For some students, assistance is needed. A middle-level student revealed : *"If I am dragging the memorization, the ustadz usually calls me to help me read first, then continue memorizing"* (Interview, 8 November 2025). This differentiation approach shows that leaders not only set a system but also make flexible coaching to meet the abilities of students.

In addition, research shows that *pesantren* leaders encourage innovation in *tahfidz* coaching by building a more organized manual supervision system. Each student has a memorization control book, also called the mutaba'ah *tahfidz* book, which is filled out directly by the ustadz after the deposit and muraja'ah session. This book is then reviewed periodically by the leadership to ensure that the coaching remains consistent and that the set goals have been achieved. The documentation of the *pesantren* shows that there is a recapitulation of the progress of weekly memorization pasted in the *tahfidz* coach's room to show the achievements of the students and provide motivation to them. This orderly and tiered manual supervision pattern is a simple but effective innovation to ensure that coaching continues. This strategy demonstrates the adaptive and quality-oriented nature of leadership, where the

leader not only supervises but also ensures that each coaching process runs according to protocols.

The memorization evaluation process is carried out in layers, starting from daily evaluations, weekly exams, and monthly exams. The monthly tasmi activities show a fairly strict atmosphere. If a student connects a verse wrongly, the teacher immediately stops it and provides corrections. One of the testers stated: "*We wanted to make sure their readings were not only fast, but correct and powerful. Mutqin should not just go smoothly*" (Interview, 8 November 2025). As shown by this evaluation process, *pesantren* prioritize the aspects of accuracy and memorization power in accordance with the principles of tahqiq in tajweed.

Islamic boarding school leaders play an important role in fostering the motivation of students and ustadz. Leaders routinely give tausiyah every week about the importance of memorizing the Qur'an and giving awards to students who achieve certain memorization goals. Students get certificates, gift books, or the opportunity to participate in *tahfidz* camps. This method is in line with the idea of reward in Islamic education as well as the theory of charismatic leadership, where example and emotional motivation are powerful drivers for team member behavior.

In addition, the results of the study show that this leadership strategy is beneficial. The results of triangulation showed that students were more likely to speak, especially those who followed a disciplined instruction schedule. In addition, Qur'anic culture emerged in Islamic boarding schools, which was shown by the habit of reading the Qur'an in his spare time and during coaching. Ustadz the coach said: "*Here, the Qur'an is not only a task, but it has become a necessity for children*" (Interview, 8 November 2025). This shows that the leader's strategy has succeeded in creating a learning environment that follows the principle of ta'dib—that is, sustainable activities that instill manners.

The results of the findings of the strategy of the Muhammadiyah Boarding School Islamic Boarding School Leaders in *Tahfidz* Development.

Tabel 1. Model Strategi Pimpinan *Pesantren* dalam Pembinaan *Tahfidz*

Strategy components	Field Findings	Theoretical Implications
Planning	Preparation of memorization targets, *tahfidz* SOPs, group division	Management of Islamic education strategies
Implementation	Dawn deposit, afternoon *muraja'ah*, individual coaching	Differentiation learning and training
Tiered evaluation	Daily, Weekly, Monthly, juz increase	Education Quality Assurance
Motivation and example	Reward, *tausiyah*, *motivasi ruhiyah*	Charismatic-spiritual leadership
Program impact	Memorization increased, discipline was formed, Qur'anic culture	Character formation theory

Based on the results of the study, it shows that, to improve the quality of students' memorization of the Qur'an, the leadership strategy of the leadership of the MBS Poncowati Islamic Boarding School is built through systematic planning, the implementation of disciplined and flexible coaching, tiered evaluations, and consistent motivation and examples. These results overall support transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the vision, inspiration, and coaching of organizational members as critical components of the

institution's success (Abdul Sahid et al., 2023). In the planning stage, the leadership sets the memorization goals, the standard *tahfidz* operational procedures, and the division of memorization groups. This is in line with the strategic management theory of Islamic education which states that planning is the key to the success of the program (Ramadani & Jinan, 2025). In addition, these findings support research (Ahmad_fauzan & Oki Dermawan, 2025; Siregar & Diana, 2024) which affirms that clear and structured program planning is necessary for effective *tahfidz* coaching. However, this study offers a new perspective by adding the role of leaders as the main actors, not just the supervisory ustadz, in setting *tahfidz* quality standards.

A pattern of continuous religious habituation is formed through the deposit activities of Fajr, afternoon muraja'ah, and tasmi' pekanan. These results support the theory of habit formation in Islamic education, which emphasizes that repetitive habits can shape the religious character of students (Hishnuddin & Jazilurrahman, 2025). The theory of differentiated learning, in which each student is given care according to their own ability, is supported by the practice of individual mentoring to students who have memorization difficulties (Aufa et al., 2024). (Trisusanto et al., 2024) stating that the coach must be responsive to effective *tahfidz* coaching. However, this study shows that this flexibility is not only a decision made by the trustees. However, the approach used directly by the leaders of the *pesantren* is to maintain the quality of student memorization.

Research (Suryana et al., 2021) which states that a neat and continuous memorization control system has a significant influence on the strength of student memorization, strengthened by the findings regarding the memorization monitoring system through the mutaba'ah book which is done manually. A more structured monitoring system, such as the one implemented at Al-Khoiriyyah IT Junior High School, can increase the effectiveness of memorization evaluations and assist teachers in monitoring the progress of students (Haryanto & Cahyana, 2015).

In terms of evaluation, *pesantren* leaders use daily, weekly, and monthly tiered evaluation models that are in line with the concept of quality assurance of Islamic education. Research (Fard et al., 2025), which emphasizes that the reinforcement of consistent repetitive evaluations is necessary to improve the quality of memorization, reinforced by strict and corrective monthly tasmi evaluations. This research also supports research (Amalia et al., 2024), which emphasizes that regular memorization verification is essential to maintain the continuity of memorization in the long term. Therefore, the tiered evaluation used in this *pesantren* is in line with previous research and even expands on it by showing that the participation of leaders in the evaluation process is an important element that was previously underdiscussed in the literature.

Islamic boarding school leaders provide regular tausiyah, give awards to outstanding students, and set an example in reading the Qur'an in terms of motivation and example. These results support a charismatic-spiritual leadership theory that emphasizes the importance of emotional motivation, moral drive, and moral exemplary in influencing member behavior. The study is in line with the results (Hikmah & Fitriyani, 2025), who found that spiritual motivation has a significant influence on the commitment of students to memorize the Qur'an. Therefore, this research supports previous research that states that

motivation and leadership role models are important components of successful *tahfidz* coaching, not just an additional component (Hidayanti et al., 2025).

Overall, this study not only strengthens the theory and results of previous research on *tahfidz* coaching, but also provides new information about the strategic role of Islamic boarding school leaders in three main areas: (1) setting memorization standards, (2) increasing coaching flexibility based on students' abilities, and (3) being directly involved in the supervision and evaluation of memorization.

Overall, this study shows that the memorization method of students is not the only factor that affects the success of the *tahfidz* program; A smart, flexible, and quality-oriented leadership strategy is very influential. Islamic boarding school leaders have succeeded in creating a good learning environment to improve students' memorization of the Qur'an by combining managerial elements, coaching techniques, technological innovations, and spiritual motivation. This result reinforces the idea that in Islamic education, good leadership not only organizes the system, but also builds the heart, fosters enthusiasm, and becomes an example for all members of the Islamic boarding school.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that the strategy of the leadership of the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Poncowati Islamic Boarding School (MBS) to improve the quality of students' memorization of the Qur'an is achieved through structured program planning, the implementation of disciplined and adaptive coaching, a tiered evaluation system, and providing consistent motivation and examples. The leaders of the *pesantren* not only manage the administration, but also participate in setting memorization goals, supervising the coaching process, and creating a good Qur'anic environment. It is proven that *tahfidz* coaching carried out through *Subuh* deposits, afternoon *muraja'ah*, *tasmi' pekanan*, and individual mentoring improves the religious habits of students and improves their memorization skills. The manual supervision system through the *mutaba'ah* book is an important component in maintaining the sustainability of the coaching. Overall, the study found that innovative, flexible, and quality-oriented *pesantren* leadership is essential for the success of *tahfidz* programs.

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