

Kiai Leadership Model in Developing the Culture of Memorizing the Qur'an

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims to describe the leadership model of the Kiai in developing the culture of memorizing the Al-Qur'an at the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo Regency. A qualitative case study approach was used in this study. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Inductive data analysis included categorizing data, grouping it into units of analysis, forming patterns, and drawing inductive conclusions based on the collected empirical data. Data Validity The researcher used source and method triangulation techniques and conducted reference adequacy. The study results indicate that the Kiai leadership applied is transformative, focusing on character building, strengthening spirituality, and achieving memorization targets systematically and measurably. The main strategies include arranging the students' daily schedules, time discipline, clear teaching methods, and leaders' active coaching involvement. The development of the tahfidz culture is supported by regular teacher development programs, student leadership training, and collaboration between teachers, parents, and boarding school administrators. The monitoring and evaluation process is carried out periodically with the tasmi' system, memorization tests, and digital technology for reporting students' progress. Furthermore, tahfidz teachers are required to possess high competence and moral-spiritual commitment, and are allowed to participate in a memorization program to recognise their achievements. The requirements for murajaah (recitation of the Qur'an) are also strictly regulated to maintain the quality of students' memorization, requiring students to recite without the Mushaf and repeat forgotten verses. These findings demonstrate that the success of a tahfidz culture is primarily determined by visionary leadership, collective involvement, and a structured and sustainable management system.*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan model kepemimpinan *Kiai* dalam pengembangan budaya tahfidz Al-Qur'an di Pondok Pesantren Darul Fikri Kabupaten Sidoarjo. Pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data secara induktif meliputi pengkategorian data, pengelompokannya ke dalam unit-unit analisis, pembentukan pola, dan penarikan kesimpulan induktif berdasarkan data empiris yang terkumpul. Keabsahan data Peneliti menggunakan teknik triangulasi sumber dan metode

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serta melakukan kecukupan referensi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan *Kiai* yang diterapkan bersifat transformatif, berfokus pada pembentukan karakter, penguatan spiritualitas, serta pencapaian target hafalan secara sistematis dan terukur. Strategi utama meliputi pengaturan jadwal harian santri, kedisiplinan waktu, metode pengajaran yang jelas, dan keterlibatan aktif pimpinan dalam pembinaan. Pengembangan budaya tahfidz didukung oleh program pembinaan guru secara rutin, pelatihan kepemimpinan santri, serta kolaborasi antara guru, orang tua, dan pengelola pondok. Proses monitoring dan evaluasi dilakukan secara berkala dengan sistem *tasmi'*, ujian hafalan, serta pemanfaatan teknologi digital untuk pelaporan kemajuan santri. Selain itu, guru tahfidz dituntut memiliki kompetensi tinggi dan komitmen moral-spiritual, serta diberi kesempatan mengikuti program sanad hafalan sebagai pengakuan atas pencapaian mereka. Ketentuan murajaah juga diatur ketat untuk menjaga kualitas hafalan santri, di mana santri wajib membaca tanpa mushaf dan mengulang ayat yang terlupa. Keseluruhan temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan budaya tahfidz sangat ditentukan oleh kepemimpinan yang visioner, keterlibatan kolektif, serta sistem manajerial yang terstruktur dan berkelanjutan.

Keywords: *Kiai Leadership, Pesantren Culture, Qur'an Memorization.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The culture of memorizing the Qur'an (*Tahfidz*) is a growing religious phenomenon among Muslims, particularly in Indonesia. This culture reflects concrete efforts to bring the Qur'an into daily life through repeated reading, gradual memorization, and striving to understand and practice its contents. The tradition of *tahfidz* is not merely a religious practice. Still, it has become a distinctive cultural entity, particularly within Islamic Boarding Schools (*Pesantren*), spiritual study groups (*majlis taklim*), *tahfidz* houses, and other Qur'anic communities. In Indonesia, the culture of *tahfidz* is deeply rooted, particularly among students (*santri*) living in the *pesantren*-based education system, where religious values, including Qur'an memorization, are an integral part of daily life.

Although there is no definitive record of when the *tahfidz* tradition began to develop in Indonesia, many believe this practice dates back to when Indonesian scholars studied in Mecca or the Hijaz around the 18th century. Upon their return to their homeland, they taught their students the Islamic knowledge they had acquired from the Middle East, including the tradition of memorizing the Qur'an. Over time, this culture developed and was passed down from generation to generation, particularly in traditional institutions such as Islamic boarding schools. Unfortunately, to date, no formal national education system explicitly emphasizes memorization as a core program, except a few universities, such as the Universitas Sains Al-Qur'an (UNSIQ), the Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Al-Qur'an (STIQ), and the Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an (IIQ), which specifically focus on Qur'anic studies.

The existence of the *tahfidz* program in Islamic boarding schools is a concrete form of Islamic propagation, not merely symbolic, but also practical and functional. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) once said that a person without a portion of the Qur'an

is like an empty, crumbling house. This Hadith suggests the importance of every Muslim making the Qur'an a part of their life, whether through reading, memorizing, or practicing it. Therefore, memorizing the Qur'an serves not only to fulfill religious obligations but also as a form of purification of the soul and forming a strong character to face the challenges of modern life (Hamruni & W., 2017).

As traditional Islamic educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools have undergone significant development. Not only do they focus on teaching classical religious sciences such as *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *aqidah* (faith), and *nahwu-sharf* (theoretical grammar), but today's *pesantren* are also beginning to expand into general education. However, the distinctive characteristic of *pesantren* remains its emphasis on spirituality and moral formation (Muthi'ah & Setiawan, 2025). One of the flagship programs that is a significant draw for people choosing Islamic boarding schools as their children's education is the Qur'an memorization program. This program has existed since its inception, but as times and generations change, its teaching methods, curriculum, and management must be continually updated and adapted (Musadad et al., 2025).

The increasing public interest in enrolling their children in Islamic boarding schools with *tahfidz* programs is inextricably linked to the current situation of the younger generation, facing various moral and social challenges. The Industrial Revolution 4.0 era has had a significant impact on the lifestyles of young people, with technological advances such as the internet and gadgets becoming part of their daily lives. Unfortunately, this progress does not always have a positive impact. Many young people are immersed in the digital world, forgetting their true identity as Muslims. Free association, harmful content on social media, and the decline in moral and spiritual values are particular concerns for parents.

Amidst these conditions, Islamic boarding school-based education is an alternative considered capable of shaping the character and spirituality of the younger generation. The boarding system and strict supervision implemented in Islamic boarding schools make these institutions effective in educating students holistically. The *tahfidz* program, in addition to fostering a close relationship with the Qur'an, also contributes to the development of discipline, patience, perseverance, and sincerity in learning. The existence of this program shows that Islamic boarding schools are not only places for mechanical memorization, but also centers for developing Islamic morals and personality (Atabik, 2014).

The successful implementation of the *tahfidz* program in Islamic boarding schools depends heavily on the strategic role of the Kiai (Islamic scholars) as the highest leaders within the *pesantren*. The kiai acts not only as a caretaker or teacher, but also as a policy designer, curriculum director, and motivator of all educational components within the *pesantren*. The Kiai's leadership encompasses spiritual, traditional, charismatic, and managerial dimensions. In developing a *tahfidz* culture, the *Kiai* plays a central role in ensuring that the educational process aligns with Islamic values and the needs of the times (Aisyah et al., 2022).

One concrete example of a *tahfidz* culture's successful development is the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo. Based on preliminary studies, this Islamic boarding school has made the *tahfidz* program a flagship program designed systematically and measurably. From a vision and mission perspective, *tahfidz* is a top priority in the institution's development. Students participating in this program are not only targeted to complete memorization quantitatively, but are also trained in the quality

of memorization, tajwid pronunciation, and fluency in reading the Qur'an. Moreover, character formation through the purification of the soul is essential in the learning methods applied.

The method used at Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School is the *tazkiyah* method, which integrates Qur'an memorization with developing the students' personality and spirituality. The *tazkiyah* guidebook serves as a reference in the *tahfidz* process, which prioritizes purity of intention, sincerity of heart, and soul as the foundation of memorization. This strategy has proven effective in fostering solid memorization and strong character in students. Unsurprisingly, student interest in participating in this program increases yearly (Rahman & Husin, 2022).

Good *tahfidz* education management includes a curriculum tailored to the students' needs, applicable methods, disciplined implementation, and comprehensive evaluation. All of these components operate synergistically under the leadership of a responsive and visionary *Kiai* (Iriawan, 2020). The *Kiai* at Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School plays a vital role not only in religious aspects but also in institutional management, social relations with the community, and the empowerment of the *Ustadz* (teacher) and teaching staff. The *Kiai* serve as role models in worship, morals, and lifestyle, which are then emulated by the entire *pesantren* community (Abidin, 2020).

This situation makes the *tahfidz* program at Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School a best practice in developing a culture of Qur'an memorization within Islamic educational settings. The strategies, methods, and approaches implemented can serve as a reference for other Islamic boarding schools wishing to develop similar programs. The existence of the *tazkiyah* guidebook, a crucial teaching tool, also merits further research. In this context, in-depth scientific studies are needed on the role of *Kiai* in developing a culture of Qur'an memorization systematically and measurably.

Therefore, based on this explanation, research focusing on the role of *Kiai* in developing a culture of Qur'an memorization is highly relevant and essential. Previous research on Qur'an memorization programs in various Islamic boarding schools has generally focused on learning management and implementation strategies, including planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation. For example, research by Zailani (2017) and Djuddah (2022) emphasizes the assessment and effectiveness of *tahfidz* programs and the role of motivation in improving the quality of students' memorization. Meanwhile, Hamid (2018) and Yulianingrum (2021) highlight the incomplete standardization of *tahfidz* learning management, particularly in curriculum development and formal planning documents. Other research, such as that by Kussrinaryanto (2014) and Julaizah (2015), links *tahfidz* to academic achievement and discusses the supporting and inhibiting factors in formal and Islamic boarding schools. Meanwhile, several journals, such as those by Kamaludin et al. (2020), provide detailed descriptions of *tahfidz* management practices in specific institutions, but emphasize operational techniques rather than values and leadership approaches.

Of all the studies, none have been found that explicitly examine the strategic role of a *Kiai* in building and developing the culture of memorizing the Qur'an in Islamic boarding schools as a whole, starting from the dimensions of leadership, exemplary values, religious vision, and integrated managerial strategies in shaping the institutional culture. Therefore, this study has an unmistakable originality by raising the primary focus on the role of *Kiai* in developing the culture of memorizing the Qur'an, which in this case is studied in depth at the Darul Fikri Islamic Islamic Boarding School in

Sidoarjo Regency. This study not only looks at the managerial aspects of the program, but also examines the values of *Kiai* leadership, spiritual and moral strategies built into the *tahfidz* process, and how *Kiai* leadership combine modern management with the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools in building a strong and sustainable *tahfidz* culture.

II. METHOD

This research employed a qualitative case study approach, where data consisted of in-depth descriptions from informal sources and field observations, which were explored, analyzed, and then described in detail. This study utilized two types of data: primary and secondary. Primary data was obtained through the subjects' verbal or spoken words and behaviours (informants). Secondary data, meanwhile, was collected through documentation. This data included supporting information from documents related to the *Kiai*'s strategies in developing a culture of memorizing the Qur'an at the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo Regency.

Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. The observation technique in this study focused on a specific object, in this case, the *Kiai*'s role in developing a culture of memorizing the Quran. Interviews were used to obtain more complete and transparent information and explanations from informants, including the Boarding School Leadership, the Head of the *Tahfidz* Program, the Quality Assurance Agency, the Dormitory Supervisor, and the *Teachers/Asatidz*. This documentation data was used to supplement the data obtained from interviews and participant observations, to corroborate the data, and to compare the data obtained through interviews.

Data analysis in this study is a systematic process of processing, categorizing, and organizing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to produce meaningful scientific information. This process involves organizing data into categories, breaking it down into units of analysis, establishing patterns, and drawing inductive conclusions based on the collected empirical data. Thus, data analysis aims to understand the meaning of the data deeply and convey research findings clearly and structured manner. To ensure the validity of the data in this study, the researcher used source and method triangulation techniques, compared the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, and verified data between informants. Furthermore, sufficient references from field notes and Islamic boarding school documents strengthened the findings. This research went through several stages, namely an orientation study to understand the initial context, a general exploratory study to review the literature and obtain research permits, a focused exploratory study for in-depth data collection and analysis, and the final stage in the form of checking and reconfirming the findings with informants to ensure the validity and credibility of the data obtained.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of *Kiai* in Developing the Culture of Memorizing the Al-Qur'an

The leadership concept applied in developing a culture of Qur'an memorization is transformative leadership. Transformative leadership is a leadership style that aims to create profound positive change within an organization by inspiring, motivating, and

developing the maximum potential of team members (Nengsih et al., 2020). Transformative leaders focus on routine tasks and possess a forward-thinking vision to encourage innovation, creativity, and sustainable organizational growth (Maisyura et al., 2022). This leadership aims to improve students', administrators', and religious teachers' spiritual, intellectual, and social quality through inspiration, motivation, and transformation of mindsets and behaviours.

The hallmark of transformative leadership is a strong vision, inspiring all elements of the Islamic boarding school to follow directions and actively participate in achieving shared goals. This leadership targets memorization, character building, scientific development, and integrating Qur'anic values into daily life to develop a Qur'an memorization culture.

Leaders with a transformative vision at the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School prioritize policies, programs, and strategies that encourage the creation of a generation of Qur'an memorizers who not only memorize but also understand and practice its teachings, thereby contributing positively to society.

Leadership Vision and Mission Focuses on the Tahfidz Program

The vision and mission are guidelines for developing educational programs, curricula, and activities at Islamic boarding schools. This helps the school focus on its long-term goals and ensures that all activities support the achievement of those visions. With a clear vision and mission and appropriate implementation strategies, the *tahfidz* program not only serves as a means of memorizing the Qur'an but also fosters a superior generation with noble morals by Islamic values.

First, the vision of the Islamic boarding school serves as a picture of the future that the Islamic boarding school aspires to achieve. The vision of the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School is to produce "a Generation of Indonesian Leaders; memorized the Qur'an, imbued with a nationalist spirit, and globally competent." This demonstrates that the Islamic boarding school aims not only to develop students who memorize the Qur'an but also to develop leadership skills, patriotism, and competency to compete internationally.

Second, the mission of the Islamic boarding school outlines concrete steps to realize the vision. The mission of the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School encompasses three important aspects: First, holistic and contextual learning: Integrating memorization with religious and general subjects. Second, utilization of the latest technology: Supporting the development of memorization with digital technology such as memorization apps. Third, a contributive culture: Developing students into individuals who care about the environment and society, through the values of the Qur'an.

This vision and mission are implemented to ensure that students not only memorize but also understand and practice the values of the Qur'an in their daily lives.

Third, a structured leadership strategy within the Islamic boarding school plays a crucial role in ensuring the successful management of the institution, achieving its vision and mission, and developing the character of its students.

A structured leadership strategy within the Islamic boarding school plays a crucial role in ensuring the successful management of the institution, achieving its vision and mission, and developing the character of its superior students. One concrete manifestation of this strategy is the systematically designed daily schedule for students.

Time for memorizing the Qur'an is explicitly allocated in the morning, afternoon, and evening, so that students have sufficient space to focus on memorization activities without neglecting other general subjects. Furthermore, Islamic boarding schools also instil the value of strict time discipline. Students are taught to value time as part of an Islamic work ethic, so they become accustomed to using their time as efficiently as possible to achieve predetermined memorization targets.

Regarding teaching, *tahfidz* teachers have a special guide covering memorization targets, learning methods, and memorization etiquette. This guide provides clear and systematic direction for teachers and students, ensuring a focused and meaningful memorization process. Furthermore, the involvement of Islamic boarding school leaders is a crucial element of this leadership strategy (Rokimin et al., 2023). Leaders act as policymakers and actively monitor and support the students' progress. This direct involvement provides additional motivation, increases students' enthusiasm for learning, and strengthens the emotional bond between leaders, teachers, and students, fostering a strong and sustainable *tahfidz* culture.

Human Resources Empowerment

Human resource empowerment is developing the potential of individuals and groups through planned education, training, and mentoring. In Islamic boarding schools, human resource empowerment involves the caretakers, students, and the surrounding community to create collaboration that supports the school's sustainability.

The development of a culture of memorization in Islamic boarding schools not only focuses on the students but also emphasizes improving the quality of teachers through competency training. *Tahfidz* teachers are regularly trained to enhance their teaching methodology, in-depth understanding of the Qur'an, and pedagogical approaches that align with the students' character. With this improvement, teachers can guide students more effectively, not only in the technical aspects of memorization but also in fostering a stronger spiritual understanding. Furthermore, the *tahfidz* program is strengthened through the active involvement of students in various constructive activities, such as leadership training and social programs based on Qur'anic values. These activities encourage students to apply Qur'anic values daily, developing noble and responsible characters (Istikarini et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the management of the *tahfidz* program is carried out with a collective approach involving all elements of the Islamic boarding school, from the leadership and teachers to the students and parents. The leadership of the Islamic boarding school encourages synergy among all parties, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for supporting the success of the *tahfidz* program. Through this collective involvement, a supportive environment is created, spiritually, emotionally, and socially, for the students' development. This approach not only strengthens the institutional structure of the Islamic boarding school but also fosters a collaborative learning culture oriented toward Qur'anic values in every aspect of the students' lives.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

As Islamic educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools play a complex role in educating students, managing resources, and preserving Islamic traditions and values (Yakin, 2014). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the *Kiai* to ensure the sustainability and improvement of the quality of education and management of the Islamic boarding school.

In developing a culture of Qur'an memorization in Islamic boarding schools, monitoring is a crucial part of ensuring each student is on track to achieve their memorization goals. Monitoring is carried out daily through *tasmi'* (memorization submission) activities with their supervising teachers. Furthermore, students' memorization progress is systematically recorded, utilizing digital technology to store and track each individual's progress. This recording allows the Islamic boarding school to monitor progress objectively and accurately.

Routine evaluations are also implemented to assess the effectiveness of the *tahfidz* program and the policies implemented. These evaluations are conducted daily, monthly, and even semiannually, covering memorization and understanding the meaning of the memorized verses. The monitoring and evaluation results are then used as a basis for continuous improvement. Islamic boarding schools actively improve their teaching methods, memorization strategies, and coaching systems based on field findings. This approach ensures that the *tahfidz* program is constantly innovated and updated, thus remaining relevant and able to meet the challenges of the times and the needs of today's generation.

Implementation of *Kiai* in Developing the Culture of Memorizing the Qur'an

Islamic boarding school leaders act as teachers, motivators, managers, and spiritual guides. They manage the *tahfidz* program and serve as role models in the students' daily lives. Leadership at the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo strategically creates a strong and sustainable *tahfidz* culture. The leadership implemented is not only based on instructions and regulations, but also on exemplary behaviour and motivation. The boarding school's leader, Mr. Agus Haryadi, emphasized the importance of developing systematic strategic steps to support the *tahfidz* program, from planning and implementation to evaluation. The success of leadership implementation in developing the *tahfidz* culture in this Islamic boarding school can be seen from several aspects, such as: Exemplary Leadership: Leaders act as role models in creating a Qur'anic environment, where the values of the Qur'an are used as guidelines in daily life, Strategic Management: Formulation of policies oriented towards the development of students and the fulfillment of infrastructure needs, such as special classrooms, *mushaf*, and professional teaching staff and Collaboration: The leadership of the Islamic boarding school collaborates with the teaching team, student guardians, and the community to ensure the optimal achievement of the *tahfidz* program targets. The implementation is as follows:

Planning Stage

The planning stage is the primary foundation for developing a culture of memorization at Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School. At this stage, the program's leaders and coordinators identify needs and develop strategies that include:

1. Formulate Goals and Targets (output and income)

One of the main outputs of the *tahfidz* program is individuals who can memorize the Qur'an with *mutqin* (strong memorization). They can learn all 30 Juz, specific Juz, or meet the program's target. These graduates become Islamic human resources who can contribute in various fields, such as education, preaching, or becoming mosque imams.

The *tahfidz* program focuses on memorization, developing Qur'anic character, and instilling noble morals derived from the Qur'an. Students who complete this program are expected to become individuals with integrity, responsibility, and Islamic etiquette

in their daily lives. Furthermore, graduates of the *tahfidz* program at the Darul Fikri Islamic boarding school also play a role in creating a more Islamic community. They serve as role models for others within the family, community, and broader society. With the presence of *hafidz/hafidzhah*, the religious atmosphere in society will become more vibrant. The formulation of this objective is in line with practices in various other Islamic boarding schools which emphasize the importance of integration between memorizing the Qur'an and forming Islamic character (Suryana et al., 2018).

2. Classifying the class of Al-Qur'an memorization

Classification of Qur'an memorization classes is an essential strategy in developing a culture of memorization, aiming to adapt learning methods to students' abilities. This system allows students to learn according to their potential and ability level, thus creating an effective and non-burdensome learning environment. This classification provides a clear structure and gradually motivates students to improve their memorization. Class classifications based on student ability include:

First, Regular Class: This class is intended for beginners or students with a memorization target of 5-14 Juz. This system allows students to begin the memorization process with realistic targets. The requirement to pass the *tahsin* ensures that students have a strong foundation in reading the Qur'an before beginning memorization. Second, Accelerated Class: For students who have completed regular classes and can memorize more quickly, the accelerated class offers higher targets (15-30 Juz) with an intensive approach, such as a daily quota of one page.

Third, Juz Specialization Class focuses on students dedicated to memorizing 30 juz within three years, emphasising religious-based education. Fourth, the *Mutqin* Class: This class helps students who have completed 30 Juz strengthen their memorization with comprehensive *tasmi'* (recitation) within 5-10 days. Fifth, the Class with Sanad (Recitation with Sanad): As the highest class, this program integrates memorization with a chain of narrations that goes back to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Students not only complete the 30 Juz but also submit their memorization to a teacher with a chain of narrations.

This classification system accommodates students' varying abilities, so they do not feel pressured to meet excessively high targets or feel left behind by their classmates. This approach ensures that: First, beginning students receive intensive guidance through *tahsin* and regular programs. Second, talented students can be directed to accelerated or specialization classes, which provide challenges tailored to their potential. Third, students who have completed the Qur'anic memorization are given a *mutqin* program to strengthen their memorization and the opportunity to obtain a *sanad* (traditional scribe) for those who wish to explore further the science of memorizing the Qur'an.

According to the *tahfidz* program coordinator, this system helps reduce students' mental burden by placing them in a learning environment suited to their abilities. This creates a conducive learning environment, allowing students to focus on the memorization process without undue pressure.

The classification of Qur'an memorization classes also serves as a foundation for creating a strong *tahfidz* culture in Islamic boarding schools. With clear and measurable targets, each student has a definite direction in memorizing the Qur'an. First, Measurable Targets: Each class has specific targets, such as the number of daily memorizations or *tasmi'* (recitation tests) that must be completed within a particular

time. This encourages students to be disciplined and consistent in their memorization. Second, Continuous Evaluation: Exam systems such as *tasmi'* and random exams ensure that students' memorization is not merely memorized but also understood and can be repeated with *tartil* (repetition). Third, a Healthy Competitive Culture: With class levels, students are encouraged to reach higher levels, thus creating strong internal motivation.

This classification system not only produces high-quality Qur'an memorizers but also supports the strengthening of the Qur'anic/*tahfidz* culture as a whole, namely: First, Strengthening Student Quality: Students are encouraged to memorize using a systematic method, from the basics to the stages of *mutqin* and *sanad*. Second, Improving Teacher Professionalism: This system also requires *ustadz/ustadzah* to be more professional in guiding students according to the needs of each class. Third, Impact on Society: Students who graduate from this program not only memorize the Qur'an but can also become drivers of Qur'anic culture in their communities.

The classification of Qur'anic memorization classes is a strategic step in developing the culture of *tahfidz* in Islamic boarding schools. This system effectively addresses student ability differences, creates a structured learning process, and produces competent and spiritually deep Qur'an memorizers. With proper implementation, this classification could serve as a model that inspires other educational institutions to develop Qur'an memorization programs. This approach has also been applied in other Islamic boarding schools to improve the effectiveness of memorization learning (Fatmala, 2021).

Implementation Stage

The implementation stage of Qur'an memorization learning is the core of the educational process that is strategically designed to achieve the grand vision of Islamic boarding schools, namely to produce a generation of Qur'an memorizers who not only memorize the Qur'an verbally but also can understand and practice Qur'anic values in everyday life. In this stage, learning not only focuses on memorization techniques, but also involves in-depth analysis, an emotional approach, and providing an environment that supports the success of the memorization process. Some of the implementations are as follows:

1. Competency standards and commitment of *tahfidz* teachers

Islamic educational theory emphasizes the importance of the teacher's role as a role model (*uswah hasanah*) in guiding students. According to Imam An-Nawawi, *tahfidz* teachers must possess scientific competence, noble morals, and pedagogical and social skills to foster students holistically (Ridwan et al., 2021). This aligns with the standards applied in Darul Fikri, where *tahfidz* teachers must have memorized *mutqin*, understand the meaning of verses, and use the *tazkiyah* method to build emotional relationships with students. The success of this learning is highly dependent on the competence and commitment of *tahfidz* teachers as the main drivers of the program. Therefore, implementing the *tahfidz* teacher standards is fundamental to ensuring the quality of student memorization. The competency standards for *tahfidz* teachers include: First, memorizing the Qur'an with a *mutqin* level according to the class taught (5–14 Juz for regular classes, 15–30 Juz for accelerated courses, and 30 Juz for *mutqin*). Second, understanding the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an provides a deeper teaching context. Third, possess a Qur'an teaching certificate as proof of their teaching qualifications. Fourth, apply the *tazkiyah* method to build a heartfelt relationship

between the teacher and students. Fifth, master good classroom management, including resolving memorization-related issues faced by students.

In addition to technical competence in teaching, memorization teachers at the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo must possess a strong moral and spiritual commitment as the primary foundation for educating their students. They must have a sound faith, consistent devotion, and noble character, as being a Qur'an teacher means being a role model in everyday life. Memorization teachers are also expected to be role models in reading, understanding, and practicing Qur'anic values in real life. This commitment is inseparable from their support for the vision and mission of the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School Education Foundation, which emphasizes the importance of developing Qur'anic character. Furthermore, teachers are required to comply with all regulations established by the Islamic boarding school as a form of institutional integrity and responsibility. In carrying out their mandate as Al-Qur'an teachers, they must be serious and professional, not only in delivering the material but also in fostering the spirituality and discipline of the students to create a generation of quality Al-Qur'an memorizers.

2. Al-Qur'an memorization teacher development program

The Qur'an memorization teacher development program aims to improve the competence, spirituality, and professionalism of *tahfidz* teachers so they can optimally fulfill their role as educators. Research at the Daarul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School also shows that mentoring *tahfidz* teachers through memorization programs with sheikhs and intensive training improves the quality of *tahfidz* learning (Fachrudin, 2017). Therefore, the teacher competency standards at Darul Fikri reflect best practices proven effective in previous research. Several key activities in this program aim to improve the competence, spirituality, and professionalism of *tahfidz* teachers so they can optimally fulfil their role as educators.

Tahfidz teachers play a crucial role in maintaining the quality of *tahfidz* education, as their strong memorization and ability serve as role models who can inspire students to be more enthusiastic about memorizing the Qur'an. With this strategic approach applied to learning, the Islamic boarding school hopes to develop a generation of Qur'anic students who are intellectually superior and possess strong spiritual and moral integrity. Some of the main activities in this program include: First, Memorization Refreshment: Ensuring teachers' memorization remains sound through regular evaluation. Second, Reading Correction: Correcting reading errors to maintain the validity of memorization. Third, Intensive Training: Providing training in effective teaching methods that can motivate students to be enthusiastic about memorizing.

This is relevant to the theory of teacher professionalism, which states that improving competence through continuous training is key to achieving high-quality education. Qur'an teachers are required to submit new memorization materials every week. Teachers who have not yet memorized 30 Juz must submit at least one page until they have completed all 30 Juz. However, students entrusted with teaching are not required to continue submitting after reaching 5 Juz. Furthermore, teachers are also required to take memorization exams of at least 1 Juz each week to maintain their memorization.

The development of *tahfidz* teachers at the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo is carried out systematically and continuously to maintain the quality and consistency of their memorization. Each month, teachers must take a memorization

exam of five or multiples of the Qur'anic chapters (Juz) and perform a *tasmi'* of 30 chapters of the Qur'an. This activity aims to strengthen memorization and improve the ability to recite the Qur'an in *tartil* according to the rules of tajwid. In addition, at the end of each semester, teachers also participate in a memorization evaluation of at least 15 chapters. This semester-long coaching is a critical moment to review the overall resilience of memorization in terms of fluency, accuracy, and appreciation of the memorized verses. Furthermore, for teachers who have memorized 30 chapters with *mutqin*, a program can take the *sanad* (chain of Qur'anic recitation) as official recognition. Through this program, teachers are allowed to deepen their knowledge *sanad*. They are expected to be willing to serve at the Islamic boarding school for a minimum of ten years as a form of commitment to maintaining and preserving the tradition of Qur'anic scholarship within the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School.

3. Teaching Techniques for Memorization of the Qur'an

Qur'an memorization teaching techniques are crucial to the process. This process is not only oriented toward memorization but also aims to shape students' character, spirituality, and discipline. Therefore, effective teaching techniques must be designed with clear and structured objectives. These objectives are usually aligned with a timeframe, such as daily, weekly, monthly, semester, or even annual programs so that memorization progress can be measured systematically and sustainably.

First, the daily program is designed to build consistency in memorization. Each day begins with preparation for new memorization after the Subuh prayer until 5:45 a.m. WIB. New memorization submissions, or *ziyadah*, are conducted during school hours, from 7:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. WIB, with students divided into groups sitting in a circle and one teacher teaching approximately 10-15 students. After the Maghrib prayer until 7:00 p.m. WIB, pair recitations and memorization tests are conducted with memorization partners. During the Qur'an study days, students must recite at least 1 Juz a day or at least 1/7 of their total memorization. In addition, group and individual recitations are conducted with a minimum target of completing the recitation once a month. Tahsin recitations are also conducted daily half an hour before the Maghrib call to prayer until the Maghrib call to prayer. In 12th grade, students also lead the Maghrib and Isha prayers.

Second, several weekly activities support the development of students' memorization. These include motivational sermons delivered by the Kiai every Sunday after Maghrib and memorization tests for 1 Juz (jurisprudence) with their respective teachers. Qiyamul Lail (recitation of the Qur'an) is also held in congregation to complete 1 Juz on Sundays, followed by *Fahmul Qur'an* activities to deepen students' understanding of the Qur'an.

Third, monthly programs focus on strengthening memorization and providing additional motivation for students. Inspirational Qur'an memorization lectures, held once each semester, aim to provide motivation and new insights to students by inviting inspirational speakers from outside the Islamic boarding school. Final submissions for completing the 30 Juz are held in the first and second weeks after Asr prayers. Additionally, a complete recitation of the Qur'an by the unseen (*semaan*) is conducted per class every Friday after Isha prayers until Saturday.

Fourth, the program focuses more on evaluating memorization achievements at the semester level. Inspirational Qur'an memorization lectures are also held to motivate students. Mid-term and final exams (*Ujian Tengah Semester/UTS* and *Ujian Akhir*

Semester/UAS) involve students reviewing all submitted memorisation. The Year-End Assessment (*Penilaian Akhir Tahun/PAT*) is also conducted using the submitted memorization. Furthermore, memorization of 5 Juz and their multiples is standardized every semester to measure each student's progress.

Fifth, the annual program aims to recognize students' achievements in memorizing the Qur'an. One such event is the 30-juz memorization graduation ceremony held at the Grand Mosque during the month of Sha'ban, which is held conditionally. The 30-juz memorization graduation ceremony is also held annually with the junior high and senior high school graduation ceremonies. In addition, *Mukhoyyam Al-Qur'an* activities are held at Dafi branches and partners for junior high school grade 9 and MA grade 11. Students are also allowed to participate in *Al-Musabaqah Al-Qur'aniyah* on 1 Muharram, which all attend. Other activities include sending selected students to join in Al-Qur'an competitions up to the international level and the Young Dai program which provides opportunities for students to preach outside Sidoarjo during Ramadan.

4. Method of memorizing the Qur'an

The method applied in memorizing the Al-Qur'an at this Islamic boarding school is the *tazkiyah* method, which emphasizes the heart's cleanliness and improves the quality of memorization. This method is designed to create memorization that is not only aimed at memorization, but also at understanding and practicing the contents of the Al-Qur'an. In the *tazkiyah* method, the memorization stages are structured to ensure the quality of students' memorization. The stages of memorizing using the *tazkiyah* method consist of several steps that every student must follow:

First, Recitations with *tartil* and Understanding (20x). Students are asked to read the verses of the Al-Qur'an in *tartil* (good and correct) 20 times to deepen the meaning and understand the memorized verses. Second, memorize ½–1 page. After the recitation, the students continue memorizing half a page to one page. This process is carried out in stages to ensure solid memorization. Third, Deposit by *men-ta'lif* with the previous nine pages. Memorizing combines the new memorization with the nine previously memorized pages. This is done to ensure that the existing memorization is maintained.

Fourth, mentioning one *tazkiyah* lesson from each memorized page. Each memorized page is accompanied by an understanding, where the student mentions one lesson from the *tazkiyah* that can be learned from each page. Fifth, *takrir* the newly memorized page (10, 15, or 20 times). The newly memorized page is repeated (*takrir*) 10 to 20 times to strengthen memorization. Sixth, *tasmi'* one Juz in one assembly and a random exam after completing one Juz. Students are asked to *tasmi'* (listen to the memorization) one Juz in one assembly and conclude with a random exam after completing one Juz. This exam aims to measure the extent of memorization.

5. Recitation of the Qur'an

Murajaah is the process of repeating previously memorized texts, which is key to maintaining memorization. Research at the *Islahul Ummah Tahfidz House* shows that regular *murajaah* improves students' ability to retain their memorization over the long term. *Murajaah* involves several requirements and targets that students must meet (Vandita, 2020).

The general provisions for implementing *murajaah* at the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo are designed to maintain the quality and accuracy of students' Qur'an

memorization. Only chapters (Juz) that have been memorized and passed the exam per Juz are permitted to be recited to confirm that students have truly mastered that particular chapter. In the practice of *murajaah*, students are required to recite with *tartil*, that is, to recite verses of the Qur'an with clear, correct pronunciation and by the rules of tajwid. *Murajaah* is also conducted without looking at the *Mushaf*; students are not permitted to hold or carry the Qur'an during recitation. If students have difficulty remembering a verse, they are advised to try remembering it themselves, then ask fellow memorizers for help. If no friends can help, students are allowed to look at the *Mushaf*, and that's only for forgotten verses. After viewing, students must repeat the verse three times before continuing the *murajaah* process, to ensure the memorization is truly ingrained properly.

First, the *murajaah* memorization target at the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School is designed to ensure students can retain the memorization they have mastered. For students who have memorized 1-10 Juz, the daily *murajaah* target is 1-2 Juz with a seven-day khatam *murajaah* schedule. For students who have memorized 11-20 Juz, the daily *murajaah* target increases to three Juz in the same period. Meanwhile, for students who have memorized 21-30 Juz, the daily target is 4-5 Juz with a seven-day fixed khatam time. This system is designed to maintain the consistency of students' memorization while increasing their ability to repeat memorization effectively.

Second, the memorization time is also regulated in detail to optimize results. After Maghrib prayers until 19.00 WIB, students must *murajaah* 1 Juz, even though the Isha prayer time is earlier. In obligatory prayers and sunnah, students are also targeted for *murajaah* 1 Juz to implement memorization in worship. On weekends, *murajaah* is carried out in the form of *tasmi'* in pairs with a target of 1 Juz. Apart from that, when students are visited by their parents, they are allowed to memorize one Juz for their parents as a form of evaluation and motivation. Before the semester break, students must also convey one of the latest Juz to their parents.

For students who have completed the deposit of thirty Juz, *murajaah* is carried out daily with a minimum target of five pages for the teacher. If students can exceed five pages, *murajaah* is carried out as a random test after previously *murajaah* was done with a study partner. For students who have memorized thirty Juz of the *mutqin*, the daily *murajaah* target is thirty Juz, which is carried out through *tasmi'* thirty Juz or ten Juz in one assembly, complemented by a daily exam covering 1-5 Juz. With this system, *murajaah* keeps students' memorization strong and increases their ability to manage memorization systematically and measurably.

Evaluation Stage

Evaluation in the Qur'an memorization program is a crucial assessment process to measure the extent to which the program's objectives have been achieved. This evaluation involves several aspects, including memorization ability, the effectiveness of teaching methods, facility support, and the active role of teachers and parents in supporting the students' learning process. The evaluation focuses not only on newly learned memorization but also on other aspects, such as the ability to recite, accuracy of Tajweed (recitation), and alignment with the Islamic moral values taught in the Qur'an. This aims to ensure that each student not only memorizes but also understands and internalizes the teachings contained in the holy book.

a. Juz-by-Juz Evaluation

Juz-by-Juz evaluations are conducted after students complete the recitation of one Juz. This examination is crucial because passing the Juz-by-Juz exam is a prerequisite for continuing to the next Juz. A memorization quality assurance team conducts the exam, and the passing criteria are measured based on the student's ability to recite one Juz in a single assembly. In this exam, a maximum of two errors is allowed per page, with no more than twenty errors. Students are also tested on random questions, one per five pages, within a recitation time of between 30 and 45 minutes.

b. Daily Evaluation

Daily evaluations are conducted after students have completed one Juz. This evaluation is performed with a memorization partner to ensure that students' memorization is maintained daily. In this daily exam, students must memorize one Juz in one session, with similar requirements as the individual Juz exam: a maximum of two errors per page, totalling no more than twenty errors. The time allotted for the *tasmi'* is 30 to 45 minutes, and students are also required to answer random questions, one question per five pages, as part of the memorization assessment.

c. Weekly Evaluation

Weekly evaluations are conducted once a week to ensure that students' memorization is maintained and progressing. The in-charge teacher conducts these evaluations, and the number of pages tested is one Juz. The passing criteria for these weekly evaluations are obvious: students must be able to answer random questions, with one question for every five pages of memorization. This evaluation ensures students memorize, understand, and remember each concept taught.

d. Midterm and Final Exam Evaluations

Midterm and final exam evaluations are more comprehensive, testing students' recitation of the Qur'an (*tilawah bin-nazhar*) and oral skills in the theory of *tajweed* and *tahfidz*. These exams are held mid-term and at the end of the semester, and are administered by the *tahfidz* teacher, who is not the student's daily teacher. The number of Juz tested is the total memorization submitted by the student. The passing criteria for this exam include students' ability to recite with *tartil* according to the rules of *tajwid* and *Bayati* rhythm, correctly answer questions on *tajwid* theory, and complete memorization according to the minimum target for regular classes. The evaluation also ensures students can answer one in every five pages of random questions.

e. The five-Juz exam and its multiples are held every three months or twice a semester

This exam is only open to students who have passed the individual Juz exam. In this exam, students are required to recite five Juz in one assembly. If a student has memorized more than ten Juz, the excess Juz will be read the following day. The passing criteria for this exam are a maximum of two errors per page (twenty errors in total), with a recitation time of 30 to 45 minutes per Juz. Students are also tested with random questions, one question for every fifth of the total memorization. A study at Muhammadiyah 5 Junior High School in Surakarta showed that the five-Juz exam encourages students to be more disciplined in their recitation, thus maintaining the quality of their memorization (Tanjung et al., 2024).

f. Final Evaluation

The final evaluation is the final exam, covering all the Qur'an memorizations students submit during their studies at the Islamic boarding school. Research at Gontor Islamic Boarding School shows that rigorous final exams produce high-quality *tahfidz* graduates who can become societal role models (Anisa & Muslih, 2023). This exam is administered at the junior high school level in the middle of the even semester, and the MA level at the end of the odd semester of grade 12. The examiner for this final exam is the head of the memorization quality assurance team. The passing criteria for this final exam include the students' ability to recite the entire memorized Qur'an in one session, with a maximum of two errors allowed per page. In addition, students are also tested to answer random questions on the entire material they have learned. This evaluation aims to assess the students' success in memorization and ensure they are ready to apply it in their daily lives.

Overall, evaluation in the Qur'an memorization program aims to maintain the quality and sustainability of students' memorization and ensure they memorize correctly and adequately. This structured evaluation also helps track progress, identify challenges, and provide constructive feedback. Furthermore, evaluation aims to motivate students to remain disciplined and consistent in memorizing and internalizing Qur'anic values in their lives.

Based on the findings and discussion above, the researcher can formulate a conceptual framework for the research findings regarding Islamic scholars (*Kiai*) in developing a culture of Qur'an memorization, as shown in the following figure:

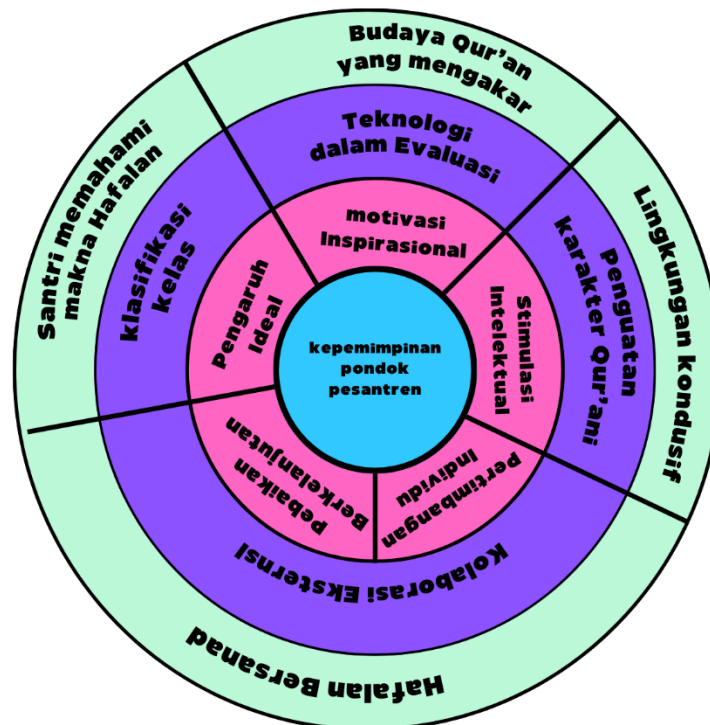


Figure 1. Conceptual building of Kiai Darul Fikri Sidoarjo

IV. CONCLUSION

The leadership implemented at the Darul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo is transformative leadership oriented towards comprehensive change, focusing on improving the boarding school community's spiritual, intellectual, and social quality. This leadership is characterized by a strong vision, structured strategies, human resource empowerment, and continuous evaluation and improvement in developing a culture of memorizing the Qur'an. The implementation of the role of the Kiai in developing a culture of memorizing the Qur'an includes three main stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. The planning stage is done by setting memorization targets and class classifications according to the students' abilities. Implementation includes improving the competence of *tahfidz* teachers, implementing character-based and discipline-based learning techniques, and using the *tazkiyah* method that emphasizes purity of heart and quality memorization. Evaluation is carried out in stages and comprehensively to ensure students' memorization is maintained in a *mutqin* and meaningful manner.

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