

The Impact and Challenges of Mentoring Implementation in Hifz Al-Quran Teaching at Tahfiz Institutions in Malaysia: A Preliminary Review

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact and challenges of implementing mentoring programs in Hifz al-Quran teaching at tahfiz institutions in Malaysia. Mentoring has been proven to be an effective approach not only in assisting students to memorize the Quran but also in shaping their character, morality, and personal excellence. Using a qualitative approach through document and content analysis, this study explores how the role of teachers as mentors influences the academic, personal, and motivational aspects of tahfiz students. The findings reveal that structured mentoring programs, supported by traditional teaching methods such as *talaqqi* and *musyafahah*, can enhance students' motivation, self-confidence, and memorization skills. However, this study also identifies several challenges in implementing mentoring programs in the digital era, including limited technological skills among teachers, gaps in access to technology, and difficulties in maintaining effective mentor-mentee relationships online. The study recommends the development of suitable digital learning modules and the provision of technological training for tahfiz teachers. Additionally, family support and the creation of a conducive learning environment are recognized as critical factors for the success of these programs. With continuous efforts and the prudent use of technology, it is hoped that mentoring programs will continue to have a positive impact on Hifz al-Quran teaching, thereby strengthening tahfiz education in Malaysia comprehensively.

Keywords: Mentoring; Hifz al-Quran; Tahfiz Education; Digital Challenges; Student Motivation

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring has emerged as one of the most effective educational strategies across various contexts, including the teaching of Hifz al-Quran in tahfiz institutions in Malaysia. Islamic education views mentoring as a process that guides a mentee to develop skills and achieve excellence in Quran memorization. Islamic civilization often refers to the concept of mentoring as *halaqah* or *usrah*, where a leader or *naqib* serves as a mentor, imparting knowledge, discussing pertinent matters, and sharing ideas with group members (Al-Banna, 1987; Al-Buti, 2004).

Tahfiz teachers, who serve as mentors, are not only responsible for delivering knowledge but also play a crucial role in guiding students to overcome challenges and achieve excellence in their lives. Future studies could explore comparative analyses of mentoring programs across different tahfiz institutions, focusing on varying methodologies and outcomes. Additionally, developing an innovative framework that integrates traditional practices like *talaqqi* with modern digital tools could address current challenges effectively. This article discusses the impact of mentoring in the teaching of Hifz al-Quran at tahfiz institutions in Malaysia, focusing on the understanding of the mentoring concept, the methods employed, and the effects of such programs on students.

THE CONCEPT OF MENTORING IN HIFZ AL-QURAN TEACHING

Mentoring refers to a relationship where a more experienced individual (mentor) provides guidance and support to a less experienced individual (mentee) to help develop their skills. According to Glenn Martin (2006), mentoring is a relationship in which a mentor supports the mentee as they enhance their skills and achieve excellence. Mentoring also aims to facilitate the personal development and excellence of mentees by providing guidance on new skills and exposure to challenges in learning. Therefore, the mentoring system is highly suitable as a practice in teaching and learning processes (T&L) at higher education institutions, as it nurtures students who excel academically and in character (Zaiton Hassan, 2003).

An effective mentoring process requires mentors to utilize a combination of strategies and approaches to achieve mentoring objectives, such as conducting small or large group discussions, role-playing, games, outdoor activities, and planned activities inside and outside the classroom (Masiniah Marzuki, 2003). Mentoring plays a crucial role in Hifz al-Quran teaching, shaping students not only in Quran memorization but also in character building and personal excellence. In Tahfiz education, the relationship between mentor and mentee is vital to ensuring that students excel in both memorization and their discipline and character development (Azman et al., 2010).

Teachers in tahfiz institutions act as mentors, guiding students toward achieving excellence in Quran memorization. Their primary role is to monitor and provide support throughout the learning process. Mentoring involves methods such as talaqqi and musyafahah, where students directly receive and recite Quranic verses to the teacher. This approach is highly effective in ensuring the accuracy and precision of students' memorization (Abu Al-Fida, 2008).

Additionally, teachers play a significant role in fostering close relationships with students through face-to-face and open communication. Such communication enables teachers to understand the challenges faced by students and provide the necessary guidance and motivation to overcome them. This is crucial for building students' self-confidence and facilitating effective Quran memorization (Murphey et al., 2001). Studies have found that mentoring programs in tahfiz institutions can help improve students' motivation and the effectiveness of their Quran memorization (Mohd Jamalil, 2016). For example, at Maahad Tahfiz Negeri Pahang (MTNP), the mentoring methods employed have significantly contributed to students' achievements, with many achieving excellent grades in tahfiz examinations. For fifteen consecutive years, MTNP Bulletin has consistently recognized MTNP as the top-performing state tahfiz institution (MTQN) in Malaysia. Systematic mentoring approaches, such as repetitive memorization (tikrar), recitation in front of teachers (tasmik), and continuous evaluation, are responsible for this success. Al-Qabisi (1955) identified drill exercises (takrar) as a critical method in helping students retain their memorization in long-term memory.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In conducting this study, the researcher employed a qualitative approach focused on document and content analysis. This approach is suitable for evaluating the impact of mentoring in Hifz al-Quran teaching at State Tahfiz al-Quran Institutions (MTQN) in Malaysia, as it provides an in-depth understanding of how the mentor's role influences students in academic, character, and social aspects. Future research could adopt a comparative methodology to evaluate mentoring practices across different institutions. Furthermore, an innovative framework integrating traditional mentoring methods like talaqqi with advanced digital technologies could offer solutions to contemporary challenges. Discussions were carried out using both narrative descriptive and analytical descriptive methods, analyzing relevant texts and documents (Sugiyono, 2009). Social science research frequently employs this approach, particularly in education, religion, and sociology.

Document analysis is a research data collection technique that uses content analysis, a process of interpreting published or broadcast communication messages (Sabitha, 2005). This study involved the examination of books, theses, dissertations, journals, and scholarly studies relevant to the impact of mentoring, the role of mentors, and contemporary challenges in tahfiz education. The goal of this analysis was to collect data on how mentoring improves students' memory skills, develops their character, and tackles learning challenges in tahfiz institutions.

Meanwhile, content analysis involves an objective and systematic explanation of information explicitly present in texts (Ahmad Munawar Ismail & Mohd nor Shahizan Ali, 2020). This analysis applied both deductive and inductive approaches. The inductive method involved describing, analyzing, and summarizing data to verify facts and information from a specific to a general perspective, particularly regarding the impact of mentoring in Hifz al-Quran teaching at tahfiz institutions. On the other hand, the deductive method focused on drawing conclusions by analyzing data through thought patterns that transitioned from general statements to specific discussions, highlighting the challenges and strategies to enhance the role of mentoring in tahfiz education in contemporary Malaysia.

THE IMPACT OF MENTORING IN HIFZ AL-QURAN TEACHING

Mentoring has become an increasingly prominent educational approach in modern education systems, including in Hifz al-Quran education. The concept of mentoring, which involves a close relationship between mentor and mentee, aims not only to enhance academic performance but also to strengthen personal and spiritual development. In the context of Hifz al-Quran education, mentors often take the form of teachers, ustaz, or murabbi, who not only oversee students' memorization progress but also guide them in understanding Islamic values and cultivating noble character.

Hifz al-Quran education possesses a unique nature that demands high discipline, perseverance, and a specific psychological approach. As such, mentoring becomes a vital element in ensuring students achieve their memorization goals successfully. Studies have shown that effective mentoring provides a positive impact on students' motivation, enhances memory retention, and fosters relationships that support emotional and spiritual growth. In the digital era, the challenges of implementing mentoring have evolved. The adoption of technology, such as Quran memorization applications and online learning platforms, has broadened access to mentoring. However, it also raises questions about the effectiveness of achieving emotional and spiritual elements in virtual environments. This section will discuss the impact of mentoring in Hifz al-Quran education through an analysis of its implementation and effectiveness in Malaysia.

Enhancing Motivation and Self-Confidence

Through continuous guidance from mentors, students feel more motivated and confident in their memorization process. Positive encouragement from mentors plays a crucial role in helping students overcome self-doubt and instilling confidence to achieve their memorization goals. This directly enhances students' mental readiness to face the challenges inherent in Quranic memorization, which often requires a high level of patience and resilience (Mohd Jamalil, 2016). Furthermore, consistent mentoring helps students build the confidence to participate in group activities, improve their social skills, and foster a positive attitude toward the learning process.

Effective mentoring provides moral support to students, enabling mentors to identify the weaknesses students face and offer specific encouragement and strategies to overcome them. This is particularly important, as many Tahfiz students experience stress in meeting memorization standards, and effective mentoring can alleviate this pressure by providing practical and realistic guidance. Beyond academic aspects, mentoring also plays a vital role in building students' self-confidence in facing life's challenges by strengthening their mental, spiritual, and emotional resilience.

Enhancing Memorization Skills and Academic Performance

Guidance through the methods of talaqqi and musyafahah enables students to improve their memorization skills with greater precision and fluency. Talaqqi, which involves reciting verses in the presence of a teacher, ensures that students can correct mistakes and understand the meanings of the verses they memorize. Meanwhile, musyafahah, based on oral repetition techniques, helps students reinforce their memory and enhance their mental endurance for long-term retention (Sabri Mohamed et al., 2016).

This guidance not only enhances memorization but also enhances students' academic performance in other subjects. This guidance not only enhances memorization but also enhances students' academic performance in other subjects. Students acquire high discipline, strong focus, and effective learning techniques through talaqqi

and musyafahah. These qualities make them more adept at managing their study time and refining their overall mastery of knowledge, ultimately leading to better academic performance.

Character and Moral Development

Mentoring plays a significant role in shaping the character and morals of students. Teachers act as exemplary role models, guiding students to become responsible and virtuous individuals, which is essential in developing disciplined and well-mannered personalities (Al-Banna, 1987). In the teaching of Hifz al-Quran, teachers are not only providers of knowledge but also exemplars of practicing noble Islamic values. The effectiveness of mentoring in this regard is evident when students demonstrate improvement in their moral conduct, such as showing respect for teachers, taking responsibility for their memorization, and maintaining discipline in daily life.

Effective mentoring enables students to learn and internalize virtuous values through daily interactions with their mentors. This process provides students with practical opportunities to understand how noble character can be applied in everyday life, transforming them into not just memorizers of the Quran (hafiz al-Quran) but also individuals with commendable personalities. This is one of the primary impacts sought in the implementation of mentoring at tahfiz institutions, as the objective of Hifz al-Quran education extends beyond mere memorization to include the cultivation of outstanding character and moral integrity.

Reducing Learning Stress

The close relationship between mentors and mentees helps alleviate stress in the learning process. Students feel more comfortable sharing the challenges they face and receiving guidance to overcome them, making the learning process more positive and enjoyable. Stress in learning is common in tahfiz education, particularly in the context of Quran memorization, which requires consistent and repetitive memorization. However, with the presence of mentors who understand students' situations and provide continuous moral support, students can reduce feelings of pressure and feel more motivated to persevere (Eller et al., 2014).

Beyond emotional support, mentoring also equips students with better time management techniques and learning strategies. Students learn to set realistic goals and devise strategies to achieve them under the mentor's guidance, which alleviates the stress associated with memorization demands. Methods such as structured study time, periodic repetition approaches, and spiritual guidance help students approach the memorization process in a more composed and organized manner.

Development of Social and Leadership Skills

Every individual, including Tahfiz students, possesses diverse potential to enhance themselves and their lives. This diversity is essential to building a harmonious society and achieving national progress. A nation's development relies on its people having a wide range of skills and values that can contribute positively to areas such as economics, science and technology, healthcare, and particularly education. Mentors, who possess greater experience, skill, and knowledge in specific fields, can fully realize these potentials through advice, guidance, instruction, and support. Mentoring serves as a tool for developing the potential of individuals or groups in fulfilling responsibilities or learning new skills (Little et al., 2010).

In the context of tahfiz students, the implementation of mentoring in Hifz al-Quran teaching at tahfiz institutions in Malaysia has a significant impact. The development of social and leadership skills through mentoring encourages students to interact more effectively, not only with their mentors but also with their peers. Mentoring also cultivates leadership qualities in students, especially when they assume the responsibility of leading small groups during halaqah sessions. Tahfiz students can optimally develop their potential through mentoring, enabling them to make greater contributions to society and the nation.

The Use of Technology in Mentoring Tahfiz Education

In this digital era, technology has become a crucial element in various aspects of life, including education. In the context of Tahfiz al-Quran education, the integration of technology into the mentoring process has brought significant changes that contribute to improving the quality of Quran memorization learning. In mentoring Tahfiz

education, the use of technology involves various Quran memorization applications and interactive platforms that help mentors monitor students' progress more efficiently.

Technology such as Quran memorization apps and e-learning platforms allows students to revise anywhere, supporting the frequent repetition required for retention. Additionally, digital communication platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams facilitate the connection between mentors and mentees. Despite certain constraints, the use of these platforms has demonstrated the effectiveness of online Quran memorization learning. Mentors can provide immediate feedback on students' recitation and continuously offer motivation to help build students' mental resilience (Noorimah Misnan et al., 2022).

Self-Assessment and Enhancing Adaptation to Flexible Learning

In the context of tahfiz students, self-assessment is a crucial element that helps them achieve success in Quran memorization as well as in developing good character. The self-assessment process involves students evaluating their own memorization performance, identifying weaknesses in their memorization, and planning strategies to improve. This fosters a sense of responsibility for their own progress and encourages self-discipline, which is an essential aspect of Quranic education.

According to research by Josephine anak Guntol and Faridah Mydin Kutty (2020), mentoring programs have been shown to enhance students' self-concept. Through guidance from mentors, students can identify their strengths and weaknesses, which in turn helps them adapt to more flexible and effective learning methods. Mentoring assists students in developing self-assessment skills through continuous feedback from mentors, enabling them to adjust to flexible learning approaches.

Through self-assessment, tahfiz students can also develop a sense of accountability for their own learning. This process raises their awareness of weaknesses, such as inaccuracies in memorization or inconsistencies in repetition. Mentors can guide students in setting realistic memorization goals and encourage them to measure their progress regularly. This helps students stay focused and dedicated to achieving their targets. For example, mentors can suggest ways for students to divide longer surahs into smaller sections and set daily targets for memorizing each section. Through self-assessment, students can monitor their progress in achieving these goals and make adjustments to their memorization techniques if necessary.

Active Engagement and Collaborative Lear

In the context of tahfiz students, active engagement within a learning community plays a vital role in fostering a sense of collective responsibility and openness among peers. Mentoring programs in tahfiz institutions aim not only to ensure that students' Quran memorization is at an optimal level but also to create a conducive learning environment where every student feels part of a community and is actively involved in collaborative learning.

According to research by Che Wan Ida Rahimah (2018), collaborative learning is key to developing holistic personal independence. For tahfiz students, such collaboration takes place through activities like halaqah, group tasmik, and discussions under the guidance of a mentor. Halaqah, for instance, is a session where students gather to read and revise their memorization in turns before a mentor or naqib, who acts as a facilitator. In these halaqah sessions, students not only practice their memorization but also gain opportunities to learn from their peers' mistakes, strengthen their memory retention, and improve their overall memorization performance.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING MENTORING IN THE DIGITAL ERA

In the context of Hifz al-Quran teaching at tahfiz institutions in Malaysia, the implementation of mentoring in the digital era encounters various challenges that require specific attention to ensure the effectiveness of these programs. The following are some of the key challenges faced in implementing virtual mentoring:

Lack of Technological Skills Among Teachers

The lack of technological skills among tahfiz teachers is a significant challenge in the implementation of digital mentoring. Many tahfiz teachers are more accustomed to traditional methods such as *talaqqi* and *musyafahah*, which require face-to-face interaction and have limited exposure to digital tools such as Quran memorization applications or online learning platforms. This lack of skills results in teachers being less confident in using technology as a medium for teaching and mentoring. For instance, a study by Che Wan Ida Rahimah (2018) highlighted that collaborative learning can help improve technological skills, but it requires continuous training and support from management. Therefore, specialized training for tahfiz teachers is essential to ensure they can adapt to more modern and technology-based teaching methods.

The Digital Divide in Technology Access

Not all Tahfiz students have equal access to technological devices, such as computers or smartphones, nor do they have access to high-speed internet. This digital divide results in inconsistencies in the effectiveness of online learning. Low-income students suffer disproportionately because they may not have the financial resources to purchase the necessary devices or internet access for virtual mentoring sessions. Unequal access to technology leads to disparities in learning opportunities. To address this gap, initiatives such as providing devices or internet subsidies for students in need are essential to ensure that every student has equal opportunities to participate in digital tahfiz education.

Challenges in Direct Supervision and Monitoring of Memorization

Virtual learning poses challenges for mentors in monitoring students' memorization with the same accuracy as face-to-face sessions. Tahfiz requires strict supervision to ensure correct memorization of every verse in the Quran. Virtual sessions sometimes compromise the quality of monitoring due to technical issues such as internet connectivity disruptions. Therefore, mentors must make additional efforts to ensure that students meet the required memorization standards, including arranging physical sessions when necessary.

Disruptions in the Home Learning Environment

Online learning sessions present challenges in terms of a non-conducive home learning environment, including distractions from family members or social media, which can affect students' focus. In tahfiz institutions, concentration and discipline are crucial to ensuring effective Quran memorization. However, without a conducive environment, students are more susceptible to these distractions. Therefore, mentors must provide specific guidance on time management and creating an optimal learning environment for both students and their parents. A study by Eller et al. (2014) also emphasizes the importance of environmental support in ensuring the success of online learning processes.

Lack of Suitable Digital Mentoring Modules

The lack of tailored learning modules for digital mentoring is another significant challenge. Existing digital modules are still underdeveloped and often fail to address the specific needs of tahfiz learning, which requires frequent repetition (*tasmik*) and consistent supervision. This forces Tahfiz teachers to rely on traditional methods that are less suited to the digital environment. Therefore, it is essential to develop digital learning modules that cater to the specific requirements of tahfiz education, serving as a reference for tahfiz teachers. We should adapt effective teaching modules to the learning context to achieve optimal effectiveness.

Lack of Physical Interaction and Closeness in Relationships

In Tahfiz education, physical interaction plays a crucial role in fostering closeness between mentors and mentees. Face-to-face interaction allows students to feel the presence of their teachers, providing additional motivation for them to persevere. However, in online learning, this physical connection is difficult to replicate, resulting in a weaker bond between mentors and students. This affects students' motivation and engagement in the memorization process. A close relationship between mentor and mentee is fundamental to the effectiveness of mentoring programs, requiring interaction that goes beyond mere online communication.

Challenges in Integrating Technology with Religious Values

Another significant challenge is the difficulty in integrating technology with Islamic religious values and culture. The use of technology in Quranic teaching requires special attention to ensure that digital tools align with Islamic teachings. Unregulated use of applications or platforms may expose students to inappropriate content or other distractions that could disrupt their spiritual learning. Therefore, we need clear guidelines to ensure the preservation and untainted Quranic teaching process in tahfiz education, in line with Islamic values.

Limited Family Support

Online learning requires strong family support to create a conducive environment and provide continuous encouragement. However, not all families are able or equipped with the knowledge to offer this support, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Family support is crucial for Tahfiz students, who often need assistance managing their time and learning environment effectively.

CONCLUSION

Overall, mentoring in the teaching of Hifz al-Quran at tahfiz institutions in Malaysia plays a crucial role in ensuring that students excel not only in Quran memorization but also in their character development and personal growth. When implemented effectively, mentoring programs can enhance the efficiency of teaching and learning processes and help students achieve the desired level of excellence. However, we must address several challenges in implementing these programs, such as strengthening teachers' skills and providing a more systematic structure for mentoring programs. Furthermore, we must wisely navigate the new opportunities and challenges presented by the digital era.

Recommendations to improve the effectiveness of mentoring include providing Tahfiz teachers with continuous training in technological skills to support digital learning. Tahfiz institution management should ensure equal access to technology for all students, including adequate devices and internet connectivity. Furthermore, to enable a more structured and effective mentoring process, we should prioritize the development of learning modules tailored to the context of tahfiz education. Schools and parents must also work closely together to create a conducive learning environment for students, especially in the context of online learning.

With continuous efforts and the effective use of technology, it is hoped that these mentoring programs will continue to have a positive impact on the teaching of Hifz al-Quran at tahfiz institutions in Malaysia. To enhance the practical value of this study, a detailed implementation framework for mentoring programs in tahfiz institutions should be developed. This could include structured mentoring modules, schedules for mentor-mentee interactions, and guidelines for monitoring progress to ensure the effectiveness of the programs. Support from the government, the community, and collaboration with other educational institutions is also crucial to holistically strengthening this mentoring system, thereby ensuring the sustainability of quality and competitive tahfiz education in the digital era.

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