Towards a Sustainable Self-Regulated Quranic Murajaah

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ABSTRACT

Murajaah is the systematic process of reviewing memorised verses of the Quran and serves as a foundational mechanism for the lifelong retention and fluency required of huffaz. At the tertiary level, this practice undergoes a critical transition as students move from the structured and externally supervised systems of traditional tahfiz institutions to a learning environment that demands greater autonomy and self-direction. This shift presents a significant challenge since the absence of imposed schedules and direct oversight often leads to inconsistency in murajaah, which in turn affects long-term memorisation. This paper provides a theoretical exploration of how principles of self-regulated learning can transform murajaah into a sustainable and systematic practice for tertiary-level huffaz. It integrates insights from metacognition and cognitive learning theories to construct a coherent framework for understanding the internal processes involved in Quranic memorisation. The discussion argues that self-regulation—operationalised through the cyclical phases of planning, monitoring and evaluation—elevates murajaah from a repetitive routine to a conscious, reflective and strategic process of learning. By internalising this self-regulatory cycle, tertiary huffaz can cultivate essential attributes such as autonomy, persistence and adaptive learning, which are crucial for sustaining Quranic retention amid the cognitive and academic demands of university life.

Keywords: Murajaah, al-Quran, tahfiz, self-regulation, huffaz

INTRODUCTION

Murajaah refers to the review of previously memorised Quranic verses, remains the cornerstone of tahfiz education, ensuring that memorisation is not a temporary achievement but a lifelong process of reinforcement. At the tertiary level, however, murajaah assumes a different character. In Malaysia, while traditional secondary institutions provide structured supervision and continuous teacher feedback, tertiary environments depend largely on the huffaz's capacity to organise their own murajaah schedules and maintain consistent self-discipline [1]. This transition from external supervision to self-regulated learning requires tertiary huffaz to develop greater autonomy, self-discipline and reflective awareness in managing their Quranic memorisation.

The cognitive and behavioural demands of this shift reveal that murajaah is not merely a ritual act. Murajaah is rather a complex learning process involving pre-planning, decision-making and self-evaluation. Contemporary studies of Quranic memorisation increasingly intersect with broader educational theories, particularly those concerning self-regulated learning and metacognition. Research demonstrates that students who consciously plan, monitor and evaluate their progress achieve better learning outcomes and stronger long-term retention [2]. Within the tahfiz context, these abilities are evident in structured scheduling, awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses and consistent corrective practice. Fatimah et al. [3] noted that tertiary huffaz often struggle to sustain consistency once the structured routines of school-level tahfiz are removed. Understanding murajaah through the lens of self-regulation therefore provides a timely theoretical response to the evolving needs of

Quranic education at higher levels.

Self-regulation in murajaah integrates both cognitive and behavioural dimensions of learning. It encompasses the technical control of memorisation, the management of time and attention, and the capacity to sustain effort. As Broadbent et al. [4] observed, deeper learning occurs when students employ higher-order thinking strategies such as reflection and self-evaluation, moving beyond rote repetition. Similarly, Ismail et al. [5] reported that metacognitive awareness "knowing when and how to revise effectively" enhances both comprehension and retention of Quranic verses. Consequently, this theoretical discussion positions self-regulation as the central mechanism that transforms murajaah from a teacher-dependent routine into a self-sustained, reflective and sustainable learning process for tertiary huffaz. To articulate this transformation, this paper employs a theoretical research design, constructing a novel framework through a systematic synthesis and analysis of extant literature from the domains of Islamic pedagogy, educational psychology and cognitive science. By analysing how self-regulation operates through the phases of planning, monitoring and evaluation, this paper establishes the conceptual foundation for sustainable Quranic murajaah.

Murajaah Process and Its Importance

Murajaah represents the third and most enduring pillar of tahfiz education, complementing talaqqi (guided recitation) and tasmi' (recital verification). While the first two stages are typically completed during formal instruction, murajaah continues throughout huffaz's life as the primary means of maintaining fluency. Classical Islamic scholars such as al-Sayuti [6] and al-Zarqani [7] described it as the central mechanism that preserves the Quran's authenticity in accordance with Allah's promise in Surah al-Hijr (15:9): "Indeed, We have sent down the Quran and indeed We will be its guardian." In this sense, murajaah therefore is not a supplementary activity but a lifelong responsibility and structured discipline that prevents cognitive decline.

Historically, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions exemplified consistent murajaah in all circumstances. Despite their demanding social and physical commitments during the golden Islamic period, they regularly rehearsed the revealed verses, demonstrating that sustained murajaah is achievable within a balanced life. Hence, murajaah should not be perceived as an additional burden but as an essential process of preservation. The practice involves systematic repetition through individual recitation, peer verification, and integration within prayer cycles. This structured reinforcement reflects the organised pedagogy of classical Islamic learning, which closely aligns with modern principles of self-regulated learning. Beyond mere recitation, murajaah also entails tadabbur (understanding and internalising meaning), which strengthens memory through comprehension. When students internalise the message of the verses and actively engage with them, murajaah evolves from mechanical repetition to meaningful reinforcement. Modern cognitive frameworks echo this notion, confirming that conceptual engagement enhances memory consolidation. By treating murajaah as a continuous, structured, and cognitively informed practice, huffaz can sustain fluency and ensure that the Quran remains a living and internalised body of knowledge.

Understanding Self-Regulation In Learning

Self-regulation has long been recognised as a cornerstone of effective and independent learning. It refers to a student's capacity to plan, direct, and evaluate their own learning processes in alignment with personal goals and situational demands [2]. Within educational psychology, it is conceptualised as a cyclical system of forethought, performance control, and self-reflection that enables students to adapt their behaviour and strategies in response to feedback [8]. Broadbent et al. [4] emphasised that self-regulated students demonstrate goal-oriented planning and a readiness to critically monitor their outcomes. Learning, in this sense, becomes an active and deliberate pursuit rather than a passive reception of information.

At its core, self-regulation comprises three interdependent components: planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Planning involves establishing clear learning goals, selecting effective strategies, and allocating time and effort to achieve them [9]. Monitoring refers to the student's ongoing awareness of performance: tracking progress, identifying confusion and making timely adjustments [9]. Evaluation involves assessing outcomes and reflecting on which strategies proved effective or inadequate. Collectively, these stages form a self-correcting feedback

loop that continuously improves learning efficiency.

The behavioural dimension of self-regulation is equally vital. Sustained learning requires perseverance and intrinsic motivation, particularly when tasks are repetitive or cognitively demanding [10]. Students must manage distractions, regulate attention, and sustain focus despite fatigue. Such behavioural control prevents burnout and fosters resilience—qualities essential for long-term mastery in memorisation-based disciplines such as tahfiz.

Towards A Framework of Sustainable Self-Regulation In Murajaah

Strategic Planning for Long-Term Sustainability

Planning forms the foundation of sustainable murajaah. It involves defining objectives, identifying materials, and selecting appropriate strategies before implementation [11]. In murajaah practice, tertiary huffaz determine which surahs to review, how to sequence their sessions, and which techniques best suit their memory profiles. Fatimah et al. [3] identified goal-setting and time structuring as the key strategies that distinguish consistent huffaz from irregular ones. Effective planning depends heavily on metacognitive awareness—understanding one's memory span, attention limits, and the relative difficulty of specific verses [12]. A sustainable murajaah plan strategically employs spaced repetition, a cognitive principle supported by extensive evidence showing that distributed practice enhances retention more effectively than massed learning. In other words, strategic planning integrates traditional tahfiz discipline with empirically validated memory science, creating a systematic schedule that reduces overload and promotes lasting memorisation.

Reflective Monitoring for Consistent Practice

Monitoring represents the dynamic, real-time regulation of learning. In murajaah, this includes detecting pronunciation inaccuracies, evaluating fluency, and determining optimal repetition intervals [9]. The peer listener model transforms into a collaborative self-monitoring system at the tertiary level, encouraging accountability while nurturing autonomy. Effective monitoring also requires adaptive flexibility. When concentration diminishes or recall weakens, students must revise their strategies by adjusting pacing, modifying techniques, or reallocating effort. This adaptability aligns with Theobald et al. [10], who describe self-regulatory adaptation as the student's capacity to modify goals and methods in response to immediate feedback. Conscious management of fatigue and cognitive load sustains motivation and prevents performance decline, forming the behavioural foundation of lifelong murajaah.

Evaluation for Metacognitive Adaptation and Growth

Evaluation completes the self-regulatory cycle by linking experience to future improvement. It involves self-testing, reflection, and the continuous refinement of learning plans. Ismail et al. [5] observed that reflective evaluation transforms murajaah from a mechanical act into a metacognitive process that enables students to recognise strengths and address weaknesses. Evaluation also connects closely with metamemory—the student's awareness of what has been retained and what requires reinforcement [12]. Without constant teacher supervision, tertiary huffaz employ self-assessment techniques such as delayed recitation, random verse recall, or peer verification to gauge accuracy. Effective evaluation fosters progress awareness, reinforces motivation, and provides actionable feedback for future planning. Through this reflective process, students internalise the mechanisms of their own learning, creating a self-sustaining cycle of adaptation that defines sustainable murajaah.

Metacognition As The Core Of Sustainable Self-Regulation

Metacognition comprises two interrelated elements: metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive regulation [9]. Both are essential for sustaining self-regulated learning. Metacognitive knowledge refers to understanding one's cognitive strengths, weaknesses, and strategies, while metacognitive regulation involves managing learning through planning, monitoring, and evaluation. In sustainable murajaah, tertiary huffaz apply metacognitive knowledge during planning—selecting memorisation techniques suited to their learning profiles—while metacognitive regulation supports monitoring and evaluation by enabling targeted adjustments based on

observed performance.

Empirical studies in educational psychology provide robust evidence for this integration. Concina [12] found that metacognitive awareness enhances self-regulation by improving students' ability to evaluate comprehension and recall accuracy. Students who ca distinguish between well-retained and weakly retained material can allocate their effort more efficiently and avoid unnecessary review. This principle is consistent with Broadbent et al. [4], who demonstrate that successful self-regulated students rely on adaptive strategies guided by continuous metacognitive feedback. Metacognition thus functions as the central mechanism that transforms awareness into purposeful action, ensuring that murajaah remains efficient, adaptive and enduring.

Synthesising The Sustainable Self-Regulated Murajaah

To articulate this transformation, a theoretical research design was employed. The theoretical synthesis presented in this paper establishes self-regulation as the fundamental mechanism that transforms murajaah into a sustainable system of learning for tertiary huffaz. The framework for this study was constructed through a systematic synthesis and analysis of extant literature from the domains of Islamic pedagogy, educational psychology and cognitive science. The preceding discussions on planning, monitoring, and evaluation reveal that these processes operate in a continuous cycle of forethought, performance, and reflection, each reinforcing the other. Planning enables students to design structured murajaah routines through goal-setting, sequencing, and time allocation; monitoring provides real-time feedback for adaptive adjustments; and evaluation ensures that experience translates into measurable improvement. Collectively, these interdependent components form an adaptive system that fosters autonomy, consistency, and long-term retention. This self-correcting process aligns with metacognitive principles central to modern theories of self-regulated learning while remaining grounded in the disciplined structure of tahfiz education.

Building upon this foundation, the sustainable self-regulated murajaah framework conceptualises murajaah as a comprehensive cognitive model that unites traditional memorisation practices with contemporary educational psychology. According to Schunk & DiBenedetto [8], self-regulation is conceptualised as a cyclical system, and this framework portrays murajaah as an iterative process driven by conscious awareness, strategic control, and continuous feedback. Metacognition acts as the unifying mechanism sustaining this cycle, empowering students to assess, adapt, and refine their memorisation methods. Viewed through this theoretical lens, murajaah evolves from a teacher-dependent routine into an autonomous, reflective, and disciplined learning practice. This framework thus bridges classical Islamic pedagogy with evidence-based educational theory, offering a practical and scalable framework for cultivating sustainable Quranic retention and intellectual discipline among tertiary huffaz.

CONCLUSION

In order to investigate the internal processes of Quranic memorisation, this study has positioned self-regulation as the central mechanism. It demonstrates that self-regulation serves as the essential mechanism for transforming murajaah into a sustainable and autonomous process of Quranic retention. By integrating the cyclical phases of planning, monitoring, and evaluation with metacognitive control, murajaah advances beyond repetition to become a deliberate, strategic, and self-correcting system of learning. The sustainable self-regulated murajaah framework emerging from this theoretical synthesis combines traditional tahfiz methodology with contemporary educational and cognitive theory. It provides a structured foundation through which tertiary huffaz can cultivate independence, discipline, and adaptability while maintaining consistency and precision in memorisation. Moreover, the framework offers a valuable basis for future curriculum development and empirical research to determine the factors that affect murajaah as a lifelong practice of Quranic preservation and intellectual growth.

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