



## Discipline of the Heart: Murajaah as a Leadership-Driven System for Sustaining 30-Juz Memorization

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**Abstract :**

This study aims to analyze the application of the murajaah method in strengthening the quality of memorization of 30 juz of the Qur'an, as well as the strategic role of kiai leadership in managing the tahfidz system. The research approach used is qualitative with a case study design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, documentation, and findings in the field, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions drawn. The results of the study show that the implementation of murajaah runs systematically and on a scheduled basis through four main forms: individual, group, with teachers, and in front of peers. This process not only maintains the stability of memorization but also fosters discipline, confidence, and spiritual calm in students. Kiai leadership plays an important role in designing policies, directing tahfidz teachers, and motivating students through a spiritual-transformational approach. The integration between the murajaah method and kiai leadership resulted in an Islamic education management system that was oriented towards quality, religious values, and a culture of continuous learning. This research contributes to the development of the concept of value-based leadership in the management of pesantren education. It provides a practical model for strengthening tahfidz programs in similar institutions.

### INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, academic attention to tahfidz institutions and methods of strengthening Qur'an memorization has increased significantly (Gafur et al., 2025; Ishomuddin et al., 2023). The phenomenon of 30 juz students is no longer ideal, but a reality that demands an effective and sustainable educational strategy. However, although many students can memorize the text of the Qur'an, the main challenge lies in maintaining the consistency of memorization so that it does not decline over time (Muhammad Faizal Rabbani et al., 2025; Shukri & Syahran Jailani, 2022). In modern Islamic boarding schools, such as the Hidayatul Hasan Blukon Lumajang Islamic Boarding School, *São Paulo*, a systematic effort is carried out to overcome these problems. Despite the practice of *São Paulo*, which has long been known in the tahfidz tradition, there is still little research that explicitly links it to institutional management and kiai leadership in maintaining the quality of 30 juz memorization (Anas et al., 2024; Zaenurrosyid et al., 2020). Therefore, this research is here to answer the empirical and academic needs in understanding how memorization coaching can be managed strategically in the context of contemporary Islamic boarding schools.

In modern Islamic educational literature, the study of Qur'an memorization strategies generally focuses on pedagogical aspects, such as repetition techniques, memorization rhythms, and psychological factors of memorization (Ayyad, 2022; Pangestuti et al., 2025). Sari (Muhja et al., 2023) found that the implementation of *São Paulo*'s repeated retransmission can maintain memorization consistency in community-based tahfidz institutions. Other systematic reviews also confirm the effectiveness of *São Paulo* as a strategy for revision of memorization in various Islamic countries (Chandra Wijaya, 2024; Makrus & Usriyah, 2023). Meanwhile, research on Islamic educational leadership develops the concept of *Islamic-oriented educational leadership*, which seeks to synergize religious values with institutional governance (Khaeruniah et al., 2024; Suwardi et al., 2024). However, most of these studies still focus on the context of formal schools, not tahfidz institutions, so the relationship between kiai leadership and the system *in São Paulo*, and the quality of memorization, has not been widely studied simultaneously.

The main gap that this study seeks to bridge is the integration of two domains that have been separated: memorization methods (*murajaah*) and Islamic educational leadership. Most previous studies have tested the effectiveness of *murajaah* in terms of memorization or technique alone, but have not examined how institutional aspects—particularly the role of the kiai as leaders—regulate, supervise, and motivate the process. This research offers *novelty* in three ways: (1) linking *the murajaah strategy* with the pesantren management system; (2) exploring the spiritual-transformational leadership style of kiai in the context of tahfidz education; and (3) developing an empirical model that can be applied to modern tahfidz Islamic boarding schools. Thus, this study serves not only as an evaluation of memorization methods but also as a comprehensive managerial and spiritual study.

Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) identify kiai leadership strategies in managing *the murajaah system* in Islamic boarding schools; (2) describe the mechanism of effective *implementation of murajaah* in the tahfidz institution; and (3) analyze the influence of kiai leadership on the quality of student memorization, including stability, smoothness, and internalization of religious values. This research is expected to enrich the literature on Islamic education leadership through practical case studies of Islamic boarding schools and provide managerial recommendations for the development of tahfidz institutions in Indonesia.

The main focus of this article is on the strategic linkage between kiai leadership and the effectiveness of *murajaah* as the core of the study. This study examines how the decisions, values, communication, and supervision carried out by Kiai form a disciplined and sustainable memorization culture. A qualitative approach is used to explore the real experience of teachers, students, and kiai in the dynamics of daily learning in Islamic boarding schools. After this section, the article will describe the research design and data collection techniques used systematically. This research is expected to be the basis for further studies on memorization leadership models in various Islamic boarding schools or the development of new variables, such as national policies and tahfidz digital technology. In the midst of the challenges of modernizing Islamic education, understanding the strategically managed memorization coaching system is important to maintain the sustainability of the tahfidz tradition in Indonesia and the Islamic world.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative design with a descriptive-narrative approach. This design was chosen because it was able to describe in depth the phenomenon of the application of the *São Paulo* method in strengthening the quality of memorization of 30 *Juz* of the Qur'an at the Hidayatul Hasan Blukon Lumajang Modern Islamic Boarding School (Chanifah et al., 2021; Muaddyl Akhyar et al., 2024). The type of research used is a case study, because the focus of the study is directed at one educational institution with unique characteristics, namely a structured *Tahfidz* system that is oriented towards spiritual guidance (Mintarsih Danumiharja et al., 2023; Lithuania, 2025). This qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the meaning, strategies, and practices of *São Paulo* based on the direct experience of education actors, without reducing to numbers or statistics (Kurniawan et al., 2023; Syafii & Azhari, 2025). The theoretical foundation refers to the interpretive paradigm, which views social reality as the result of the interaction and construction of meaning between individuals (Bin Muhammad Yusoff, 2023; Brooks & Ezzani, 2022). Thus, this research aims to understand managerial, spiritual, and pedagogical dynamics in the context of *São Paulo* in a holistic and in-depth manner.

The research data were collected through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, documentation, and findings in the field. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with kiai, ustaz/ustazah tahfidz, and students to gain a contextual understanding of the implementation of *murajaah*. Documentation in the form of activity schedules, memorization notes, and tahfidz policies is used to strengthen primary data. Findings in the field were obtained through the direct involvement of researchers in the daily activities of the pesantren for three months, in order to understand the dynamics of natural learning. The researcher plays the role of *an active participant observer* but still maintains academic objectivity. The credibility of the data is maintained through triangulation techniques of sources, time, and methods, as well as *member checking* of key informants. The research location is at the Hidayatul Hasan Blukon Lumajang Modern Islamic Boarding School, which is known to have an integrated tahfidz system.

Table 1. Research Informant

Interview Code	Background	Role in Research
I_K1_2025	Leaders of Islamic Boarding Schools	Policy setter and director of the Tahfidz program
I_G1_2025	Senior Tahfidz Teacher	The main implementer of murajaah activities and student supervisors
I_G2_2025	Halaqah Coordinator	Memorization scheduler and tahfidz quality supervisor
I_S1_2025	Final class students	Direct perpetrators of daily murajaah activities
I_S2_2025	Female tahfidz students	Provide a perspective on learning experiences and memorization constraints

The data analysis in this study uses the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Price & Smith, 2021; Shukri & Syahran Jailani, 2022; Tanjung et al., 2022). Data reduction was carried out by selecting and grouping the results of interviews, documentation, and field notes based on main themes such as the strategy of implementing murajaah, the role of kiai, and its impact on the quality of memorization.

The presentation of data was carried out through thematic narratives and summary tables that systematically described the relationships between findings. The final stage is the drawing of conclusions that are iterative in nature, where interpretation is repeated to ensure consistency of meaning. The credibility of the analysis is maintained through peer debriefing and triangulation between sources. The analysis process takes place in tandem with data collection to keep the empirical context intact, resulting in an in-depth understanding of murajaah practices within the framework of Islamic education management.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### Application of the Murajaah Method in Strengthening the Quality of Memorization of 30 Juz of the Qur'an

The application of the murajaah method is the core of tahfidz learning activities at the Hidayatul Hasan Blukon Modern Islamic Boarding School in Lumajang. Murajaah is a memorization repetition strategy that is carried out continuously to strengthen memory, maintain the accuracy of tajweed, and improve the quality of student memorization. In the context of pesantren education, this method functions as a structured memorization management system through routine scheduling and direct assistance by ustaz or ustazah tahfidz. The application of murajaah focuses not only on the quantity of memorization, but also on the quality and stability of memory. Through regular repetition, students learn to maintain the previous memorization before adding new memorization, so that the tahfidz process takes place balanced between ziyadah (addition of memorization) and murajaah (repetition of memorization).

This is reinforced by the statement of the main informant who explained the pesantren policy in maintaining the quality of memorization, "Reviewing is an obligatory part of the students' daily schedule. Even before adding new memorization, students must first submit their existing memorization. This is to ensure that their memorization is not only extensive but also strong and not easily forgotten (I\_G1\_2025)." A student also added his view, "When I review every day, I feel calmer and more confident. The verses sound familiar and easy to recall during tests (I\_S1\_2025)."

The results of the interviews indicated that the consistency of *murajaah* played a direct role in maintaining the stability of memorization and emotional readiness of students. Regular scheduling as well as intensive supervision from tahfidz supervisors help to establish regular and disciplined study habits. The practice of *murajaah* is carried out in four forms: individually, with the teacher, in front of peers, and in small groups. The four forms complement each other and create a learning cycle that is repetitive and reflective. Through this regularity, students not only remember the text of the Qur'an, but also internalize its values. The implementation of *murajaah* every day shows the existence of a memorization-based academic culture in Islamic boarding schools that emphasizes continuity, discipline, and quality.

The implementation of *murajaah* at the Hidayatul Hasan Blukon Lumajang Modern Islamic Boarding School takes place systematically through daily, weekly, and monthly programs compiled by the tahfidz section. The *murajaah* schedule is carried out after *ziyadah activities*, usually at dawn and night, with direct monitoring from tahfidz teachers. In practice, students repeat memorization in a quiet voice while walking in the courtyard of the pesantren or in a small halaqah room.

The tahfidz teacher records the progress of each student's memorization, and for those who make mistakes or forget, they are given additional guidance. The quiet environment of the pesantren also supports a focused and consistent learning atmosphere. This activity reflects the balance between spiritual discipline and academic management in fostering the memorization of the Qur'an. The application of the murajaah method at the Hidayatul Hasan Modern Islamic Boarding School can be summarized in Table 2.

Yes	Aspects	Form of Murajaah Application	Implementation and Time
1	Main objectives	Systematic repetition of memorization to strengthen memory and maintain memorization stability	Carried out every day before and after learning activities
2	Form of activity	Murajaah individually, in groups, with teachers, and in front of peers	Coordinated by ustaz/ustazah tahfidz
3	The role of the supervisor	Supervise, guide, and assess the quality of students' memorization	Tahfidz teacher accompanies each halaqah
4	Supporting facilities	Use of the standard mushaf and weekly murajaah schedule	Tahfidz room, mushalla, and dormitory
5	Consistency of implementation	Murajaah is performed every day, week, and month	Mandatory activities for all tahfidz students
6	Implementation constraints	Physical fatigue and limited rest time	Generally felt by final year students

Based on Table 2, the application of the murajaah method at the Hidayatul Hasan Modern Islamic Boarding School has proven to be effective in strengthening the memorization of 30 juz of the Qur'an in a sustainable manner. Through a scheduled system and intensive coaching, students not only achieve smooth memorization but also gain inner peace and confidence in facing memorization exams. The implementation of the four forms of murajaah enriches the learning experience and creates a culture of directed repetition. This finding confirms that murajaah is the main pillar in the tahfidz education system that not only maintains the quality of memorization, but also forms the character of discipline, focus, and toughness in students.

### Advantages and Disadvantages of the Implementation of the Murajaah Method

The application of *the murajaah method* in improving the quality of student memorization has advantages and limitations that are closely related to education management in Islamic boarding schools. At the Hidayatul Hasan Modern Islamic Boarding School, *murajaah* not only functions as a tahfidz learning method, but also as an organized memorization management system under the leadership of the kiai. In this context, Kiai plays the role of a strategic leader who prepares memorization policies, supervises the implementation of *murajaah*, and ensures the regularity of the schedule and discipline of students. Through a spiritual-transformational leadership style, the kiai can integrate religious values with managerial principles such as planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous coaching. One of the tahfidz students explained his experience in undergoing murajaah activities every day. He said with a calm but confident face:

"Every morning before dawn and the night after Maghrib, I always repeat memorization. At first, it feels heavy, especially if you memorize a lot. However, over time, the verses felt like they were blending in my head. If you repeat it every day, it feels easier to remember and not easily forget. Even when I was in front of the ustaz, I was rarely wrong. The verse seems to come out of memory (I\_S3\_2025) automatically."

Education management factors have a significant influence on the effectiveness of *murajaah*. Kiai plays the role of a decision-maker who sets the direction of the tahfidz policy, while the teacher acts as a technical implementer and daily supervisor of students. The collaboration between the two creates a layered monitoring system that ensures the continuity of memorization. Kiai's leadership strategy in this context is in line with the *spiritual-transformational leadership* model, where religious authority is combined with inspirational values and moral coaching. The implementation of a *disciplined murajaah* system shows that kiai leadership has a direct impact on the quality of pesantren education, especially in forming a culture of religious learning that is oriented towards spiritual and academic achievement.

**Table 3. Advantages and Disadvantages of the Implementation of the Murajaah Method**

Yes	Excess	Deficiency
1	Influencing their self-confidence	Less focus on new memorization
2	Strengthening the emotional and spiritual attachment of students to the verses they study	Takes up much time, so there is less time for rest
3	Easy to remember and sticks in the mind	Not focusing on other subjects taught at the madrasah diniyah
4	Becoming the most fluent memorizer	-
5	Rarely experiences errors when deposited.	-
6	Providing inner peace	-

Murajaah *activities* are not only carried out as a memorization routine, but also part of the management system for student development. Kiai sets the schedule and evaluation standards, while the tahfidz teacher is in charge of ensuring that the implementation runs according to the instructions. On several occasions, Kiai gave direct briefings on halaqah to motivate students and remind the importance of maintaining memorization. This approach shows that kiai leadership is participatory and inspiring, not just administrative. With tiered supervision and intense communication, an organizational culture is created that fosters a collective spirit of maintaining memorization. In the context of Islamic education management, this shows the integration between leadership functions, program planning, and tahfidz quality control.

### Kiai's Leadership Strategy in Optimizing the Quality of Student Memorization

Analysis of the previous two findings shows that the effectiveness of *murajaah* is not only determined by the methods and discipline of the students, but also by the existence of a leadership pattern that is structured under the direction of the kiai. Kiai plays the role not only as a caregiver, but as a strategic manager who designs policies, organizes systems, and instills spiritual values in tahfidz management. This finding leads to a new theme that is more conceptual and strategic, namely the kiai leadership strategy in optimizing the quality of student memorization through the murajaah system.

Kiai plays a strategic role as the leader of the institution in directing, managing, and optimizing the murajaah system to improve the quality of student memorization at the Hidayatul Hasan Blukon Lumajang Modern Islamic Boarding School. In the context of Islamic Education Management, kiai leadership is not only administrative, but also spiritual and transformative. Kiai plays the role of a planner, director, and moral exemplar who integrates religious values in the management of tahfidz programs. Through the implementation of an orderly murajaah system, the kiai ensures that each student carries

out repetition of memorization in a disciplined and continuous manner. This leadership strategy combines classic managerial functions—planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation—with the principle of spiritual leadership, where the motivation of students grows not because of formal obligations, but because of awareness of worship and moral responsibility towards the Qur'an.

The results of the interviews show that the Kiai leadership style at the Hidayatul Hasan Modern Islamic Boarding School is spiritual-transformational. Kiai does not lead through formal orders, but builds a value system and example that affects teachers and students. This approach reflects the concept of *value-based leadership*, where the main goal of management is not only academic achievement, but also the formation of religious character. Weekly direction, direct evaluation, and personal communication between kiai, tahfidz teachers, and students form a disciplined, harmonious, and spiritually oriented organizational culture. Thus, the success of the *murajaah system* is not solely determined by the effectiveness of the memorization method, but by the leadership of the kiai who is consistent, inspiring, and focuses on the spiritual development of the students.

Kiai plays an active role in the entire cycle of tahfidz activities, starting from schedule planning, halaqah supervision, and evaluation of memorization results. Every month, Kiai holds a *tahfidz ceremony*, which all teachers and students attend to monitor the progress of memorization as well as provide motivation. This activity also functions as a managerial evaluation forum, where tahfidz teachers report on student achievements measurably. Kiai applies a participatory approach by listening to teachers' input, adjusting coaching strategies, and rearranging schedules when obstacles are found in the implementation of the program. This leadership pattern reflects the application of the *concept of management by values*, which is the management of institutions based on the principles of religious values and strong moral examples.



Figure 1. Kiai's Leadership Strategy in the Murajaah System

Departing from the exposure of Figure 1, the Kiai leadership strategy in *the Murajaah system* reflects an integrated managerial pattern between planning, implementation, and spiritual coaching. At the planning stage, the kiai plays an active role in setting schedules and leading meetings with tahfidz teachers, demonstrating a strategic role in the direction of program policies. In the aspect of coordination, the division of tasks based on competencies reflects the efficiency and fairness of the role among teachers. Meanwhile, motivation and coaching are carried out through a spiritual approach that strengthens the emotional bond between kiai, teachers, and students. Supervision carried out directly by the kiai ensures that the quality of memorization is maintained, while exemplary discipline and worship become the moral foundation that drives the entire system.

The Kiai leadership strategy is a key factor in the successful implementation of *the murajaah system* in Islamic boarding schools. A spiritual-transformational leadership style allows for the realization of an integration between religious values and an effective education management system. Kiai plays the role of a *change leader* who motivates teachers and students through example, personal communication, and a measurable evaluation system. By applying a *value-based management approach*, pesantren have succeeded in building a disciplined, sustainable, and spiritually meaningful memorization culture.

## Discussion

This study found that the success of the *implementation of the murajaah system* at the Hidayatul Hasan Modern Islamic Boarding School is not only determined by the perseverance of the students and the memorization method used, but also by the strategic role of the kiai as the leader of the educational institution. Kiai performs a dual function, namely as a spiritual director and education manager who sets schedules, supervises the implementation of memorization, and provides religious motivation to teachers and students. The leadership approach applied is *spiritual-transformational*, where the kiai lead through example, moral values, and a collective vision to maintain the purity of Qur'an memorization. These findings show that *the murajaah system* in pesantren is not just a learning mechanism, but a form of *value-based management* that unites religious and pedagogical dimensions. The integration between spirituality and education management is the main factor in the success of Islamic boarding schools in maintaining the quality of memorization of 30 juz in a sustainable manner.

These findings broaden understanding of the concept of Islamic educational leadership, which has traditionally emphasized administrative and bureaucratic aspects (Fitri Wahyuni et al., 2023; Khoiri et al., 2022). This study demonstrates that *squirrel* leadership is more dynamic, spiritual, and participatory, consistent with the findings of Ma'arif et al. (2025) and Nisa & Andy (2024), which highlight the emergence of a values-based leadership model in modern Islamic boarding school management. However, these findings also differ in that they position *São Paulo* as a strategic instrument in strengthening the culture of religious organizations, rather than merely a practice of memorization. This approach fills a gap in the literature that rarely examines the relationship between the *Tahfidz* system and spiritual leadership in the context of Islamic education (Amin et al., 2022; Moh Ikhsani & Anis Zunaidah, 2024). Thus, this study broadens the scope of educational leadership studies through the perspective of Islamic boarding schools, emphasizing that the success of religious organizations is determined by the alignment between spiritual vision and effective educational management (Salim et al., 2024; et al., 2023).

In this study, it was found that the success of the implementation of the murajaah system at the Hidayatul Hasan Modern Islamic Boarding School was not only determined by the perseverance of the students and the memorization method used, but also by the strategic role of the kiai as the leader of the educational institution. Kiai performs the dual function of spiritual director and education manager, who sets schedules, supervises the implementation of memorization, and provides religious motivation to teachers and students. The leadership approach applied is spiritual-transformational, where the kiai lead through example, moral values, and a collective vision to maintain the purity of the Qur'an. These findings show that the murajaah system in pesantren not only functions as a learning method, but also as a form of value-based management that integrates religious and pedagogical dimensions. The synergy between spirituality and education management is the main factor in maintaining the quality of memorization of 30 juz in a sustainable manner.

This research expands the understanding of the concept of *Islamic Educational Leadership*, which previously tended to emphasize administrative and bureaucratic aspects (Arifin et al., 2024; Elis Nursetialloh, 2023). In this context, kiai leadership has proven to be more dynamic, spiritual, and participatory, in line with the findings of Umar et al. (2024) and Alqudsi et al. (2024), which highlight the emergence of value-based leadership models in modern Islamic boarding schools. However, this study differs in that it puts *São Paulo* as a strategic instrument in strengthening the culture of religious organizations, not just memorization practices. This approach fills a gap in the literature that rarely examines the linkages between systems, *Tahfidz*, and spiritual leadership in the context of Islamic education (Akmansyah & Nurnazli, 2024; Amin et al., 2022). Thus, this study expands the scope of the study. *Educational Leadership* Through the perspective of Islamic boarding schools, it is emphasized that the success of religious institutions is highly dependent on the harmony between spiritual vision and effective education management (Buhori et al., 2022; Sulthon Sulaiman et al., 2024).

The theoretical framework used is (*Transformational Leadership* Bass & Riggio, 2023; Deng et al., 2023; Kaur Bagga et al., 2023; Saad Alessa, 2021), which emphasizes four main components: *idealized influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individualized consideration*. The findings of the study show that these four components appear in real life in the practice of kiai leadership. Kiai plays the role of a moral example (*Idealized Influence*) through spiritual discipline and personal integrity; provides religious motivation (*Inspirational motivation*); stimulates the thinking of teachers and students to understand the value of worship in memorization (*Intellectual stimulation*); and gives personal attention to each student (*Individualized consideration*). This research also found additional dimensions that have not been covered in the theory, namely, *Spiritual Accountability*—the inner impulse to keep the Qur'an as a divine trust. Theoretically, this study expands the model of *transformational leadership* to become *spiritual-transformational leadership* in the context of Islamic education based on Islamic boarding schools.

Overall, this research makes a significant contribution to the development of Islamic educational leadership theory and practice. Theoretically, the results of the research enrich the *transformational leadership* model by adding a spiritual dimension as the core of transformation in Islamic boarding schools. Empirically, this study proves that the Kiai not only plays the role of a religious leader, but also as a strategic manager who integrates spiritual values, academic discipline, and memorization management systems.

In addition, this study expands the study of *Islamic Educational Management* by presenting a new perspective on how *the murajaah system* functions as a mechanism for shaping organizational character and culture. Practically, the results of the research provide a basis for Islamic boarding schools to develop a collaborative leadership model that is oriented towards the sustainability of memorization and the spiritual well-being of students. Thus, this research strengthens the paradigm of Islamic education leadership that is adaptive, value-based, and quality-oriented.

## CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes that the success of strengthening the quality of memorization of the 30 juz Qur'an at the Hidayatul Hasan Modern Islamic Boarding School is highly dependent on the integration between the application of *the systematic murajaah* method and the leadership of the kiai, which is spiritual-transformational. The *murajaah system* has proven to be effective in building consistency, discipline, and spiritual calmness in students. At the same time, the kiai leadership strategy plays a role in ensuring that supervision, coaching, and religious motivation sustainably take place. This value-based leadership makes *murajaah* not just a memorization method, but an education management system that fosters religious culture and spiritual accountability in Islamic boarding schools. The contribution of this research lies in strengthening the concept of *value-based leadership* in Islamic education management, as well as opening up space for further research to develop a spiritual leadership model that is adaptive to the dynamics of modern tahfidz institutions in Indonesia.

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