

THE EFFORT TO IMPROVE AL-QURAN READING SKILLS THROUGH *MAGHRIB MENGAJI* PROGRAMS ON PERJUANGAN STREET, MEDAN SUNGGAL

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Abstract: *This study examines the Maghrib Mengaji program as a community-based initiative aimed at improving children's Al-Qur'an reading skills on Perjuangan Street, Medan Sunggal. The study is motivated by declining Qur'anic literacy among children due to social changes, increased digital distractions, and reduced communal religious activities. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through non-participant observations and interviews with a several parties. Findings reveal that the program is implemented regularly in local mosques and prayer rooms through structured yet adaptable learning activities, including Hijaiyah letter recognition, Iqra' reading, Qur'anic recitation, tajwid instruction, writing practice, and memorization of short surahs. The program significantly enhances children's reading fluency, pronunciation, and application of tajwid rules while promoting discipline, religious habits, and character development. Its success is supported by strong collaboration among teachers, parents, mosque management, and the community. Challenges such as limited teaching staff, differences in learning abilities, insufficient facilities, and digital distractions were identified. The study concludes that the Maghrib Mengaji program provides an effective model for community-based non-formal Islamic education, demonstrating its potential to strengthen Al-Qur'an literacy and foster religious character among children in urban settings.*

Keywords: *Maghrib Mengaji; Qur'anic Literacy; Children; Mosque-Based Learning*

Introduction

The Al-Qur'an is the holy book of Islam that serves as a guide for life, a source of moral and ethical values, and a main reference in shaping the character of Muslim individuals. Reading the Al-Qur'an is not only an act of worship but also contains important educational and social aspects. This meaning is clearly shown in the first revelation received by Prophet Muhammad SAW, in the Qur'an surah Al-Alaq verse (1-5) which emphasized the command to read (*iqra'*) as the foundation of knowledge and human civilization (Muhammad Heriman et al., 2024). The command indicates that reading, including reading the Al-Qur'an, holds an important and strategic role in Muslim life. The ability to read the Al-Qur'an from an early age therefore becomes an essential part of continuous Islamic education. Regular Qur'anic reading is believed to help instill religious values, discipline, and good character in children and adolescents (Julaeha, 2018). From the perspective of Islamic education, reading the Al-Qur'an is not only understood as the technical skill of pronouncing Hijaiyah letters correctly, but also as a process of internalizing divine teachings that influence personal behavior and social interaction.

Current social conditions show significant changes in religious practices, especially among children and adolescents. The habit of reading the Al-Qur'an among younger generations has decreased in recent years. The rapid development of information and communication technology has introduced many forms of digital entertainment that attract children's attention, such as smartphones, online games, and social media. This situation has caused a shift in how children spend their time, where activities related to Qur'anic reading are often replaced by non-religious activities (Khoirurrizki & Bustam, 2022). Children tend to prefer visual and interactive digital content rather than reading the Al-Qur'an, which requires focus, guidance, and consistency. Marsinah and Nurhasanah (2023) explain that excessive use of gadgets directly affects children's interest in reading the Al-Qur'an, as children become dependent on digital entertainment and often receive limited supervision, encouragement, and motivation from their family environment.

Changes in family life and community interaction patterns also contribute to the weakening of Qur'anic reading traditions. Parents' busy work schedules, reduced social supervision, and the decline of communal religious activities, such as collective Qur'anic recitation in mosques or prayer rooms, have resulted in Qur'anic reading no longer becoming a daily habit for many children (Haya Syatina et al., 2021). The tradition of reading the Al-Qur'an after Maghrib prayers, which was once strongly rooted in Muslim culture, has gradually decreased in practice. The Maghrib time actually has strong psychological and spiritual value for children's religious development (A. Rachma, 2023). The calm and peaceful atmosphere during this time creates suitable conditions for effective Qur'anic learning. The continuation of this decline may lead to weakened Qur'anic literacy among younger generations and may reduce the quality of Islamic understanding in the future.

Efforts to strengthen Qur'anic education at the community level have been carried out through various non-formal religious programs (Zaenal Abidin et al., 2025). One program that has gained wide attention is the *Maghrib Mengaji* Movement. The program was initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia as a strategic effort to revive the tradition of reading the Al-Qur'an after Maghrib prayers, especially among children and adolescents (Wahyu, 2018). The *Maghrib Mengaji* program is designed as a form of community-based Islamic education that involves mosques, families, and local communities in religious guidance. The program focuses not only on improving Qur'anic reading skills, but also on building religious character, strengthening social relationships, and guiding children's evening activities in a positive way.

Previous research shows that the *Maghrib Mengaji* program has a positive impact on increasing interest and ability in reading the Al-Qur'an. A study by Sugestian, Syafei, and Fakhrudin (2018) found that the implementation of *Maghrib Mengaji* in Bandung City increased community participation and revived Qur'anic recitation activities in mosques. Research conducted by Marlina et al. (2021) showed that mentoring activities within the *Maghrib Mengaji* program for elementary school students improved their motivation to learn the Al-Qur'an and reduced excessive gadget use. Findings by Khoirurrizki and Bustam (2022) also confirm that strengthening the religious environment through regular Qur'anic recitation activities can help overcome low interest in reading the Al-Qur'an caused by various internal and external factors affecting children. These findings indicate that *Maghrib Mengaji* remains a relevant and effective program for addressing challenges in Qur'anic education in modern society.

The implementation of the *Maghrib Mengaji* program on Perjuangan Street, Medan Sunggal, reflects a real initiative by the local community to improve children's ability to read the Al-Qur'an. The program is carried out regularly in nearby mosques and prayer rooms with the involvement of Qur'an teachers, mosque administrators, and consistent support from parents.

Learning activities emphasize reading *Iqra'* and the Al-Qur'an based on the individual ability levels of the participants. Instruction in tajwid, practice in writing Hijaiyah letters, and memorization of short surahs are also included as part of the learning process. Within this setting, the *Maghrib Mengaji* program serves as a participatory form of religious learning that responds directly to the needs and conditions of the local community. Al-Muawannah Mosque serves as one of the primary centers for the implementation of *Maghrib Mengaji* activities in the area. Learning sessions take place every afternoon before the Maghrib call to prayer and are attended by many children who bring their *Iqra'* books and copies of the Al-Qur'an. The mosque becomes an active learning space characterized by organized tadarus and systematic Qur'anic instruction. Children receive guidance in reciting the Al-Qur'an with correct pronunciation, practicing the writing of Hijaiyah letters, and memorizing short surahs in accordance with proper tajwid rules. The learning process is guided by local Qur'an teachers, including Mrs. Deswita, who plays an important role in developing children's interest and affection for Qur'anic recitation through a patient, supportive, and nurturing teaching approach.

The implementation of the *Maghrib Mengaji* program on Perjuangan Street also faces several challenges. A limited number of teachers, differences in children's learning abilities, and the strong influence of social and technological environments affect the learning process. Strong enthusiasm from the participants and continuous support from the surrounding community show that the program has great potential to build a culture of Qur'anic reading and strengthen children's religious education in the Perjuangan Street area of Medan Sunggal. This study aims to describe in detail the implementation of the *Maghrib Mengaji* program on Perjuangan Street, Medan Sunggal, with a focus on efforts to improve children's Qur'anic reading skills. The study seeks to identify factors that support and hinder the implementation of the program within the local socio-religious context. A descriptive qualitative approach is used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of community-based Qur'anic education practices. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of non-formal Islamic education studies and to support program managers in improving the quality of religious education for children.

Literature Review

Relevant studies indicate that mosque-based Al-Qur'an recitation programs contribute significantly to improving children's Qur'anic literacy. Research by Widaningsih et al. (2025) examined the *Maghrib Mengaji* program for early childhood at TPQ Al Ittihad in Cirebon, West Java. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach and found that the program effectively introduces and teaches the Al-Qur'an to young learners. Activities in the program helped strengthen children's spiritual values while improving their ability to read the Qur'an. The study also identified challenges, including a limited number of teachers, lack of learning media, and scheduling conflicts after Maghrib prayers. These constraints show that although the *Maghrib Mengaji* program has significant potential, more careful management is needed to ensure long-term sustainability. Improvement in children's Qur'anic reading ability was also shown in the Ramadan Community Service Program in Medan. Intensive recitation sessions conducted every Maghrib helped increase children's fluency in reading the Qur'an and encouraged local community participation in religious activities. This program highlights that active involvement from students and community members can positively affect children's Qur'anic literacy.

Other research highlights the importance of using innovative learning methods. Sa'adah (2024) implemented a structured *Iqro'* learning program with a gamification approach in rural areas. The program significantly increased children's mastery of Hijaiyah letters, with average mastery rising from 60% to 85%. The gamification method also increased children's motivation to learn and their participation during lessons. Positive changes in learning attitudes were visible

both in class and at home. These results show that interesting and developmentally appropriate teaching methods can accelerate children's progress in Qur'anic literacy. Studies on non-formal religious education in mosques also reveal common challenges.

This research aims to fill gaps in prior studies by examining the *Maghrib Mengaji* program on Perjuangan Street, Medan Sunggal. The focus is on how mosque administrators, Qur'an teachers, parents, and mosque youth work together to improve children's Qur'anic reading skills. This collaborative approach is expected to help overcome challenges related to limited resources and community involvement that were identified in earlier studies. The contribution of this study is to strengthen the model of *Maghrib Mengaji* as an effective form of non-formal religious education in urban areas. This research describes community strategies for improving children's Qur'anic literacy and provides solutions to specific challenges in the local context. The findings are expected to enrich academic understanding of children's Qur'anic education and serve as a reference for developing similar programs in other urban settings.

Method

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the implementation of the *Maghrib Mengaji* Program in improving children's Al-Qur'an reading skills in Perjuangan Street, Medan Sunggal. The research was conducted in January 2026 and focused on mosque-based learning settings where the program was regularly implemented. Data were obtained through non-participant observation of Al-Qur'an learning activities, with particular attention to instructional practices, learner engagement, and the learning environment, and were complemented by interviews with key stakeholders to gain insights into program objectives, implementation strategies, and contextual challenges. Data analysis employed a descriptive qualitative framework involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, enabling the identification of key patterns and themes related to community-based efforts to enhance children's Al-Qur'anic literacy.

Result and Discussion

Implementation and Impact of the *Maghrib Mengaji* Program in Improving Children's Al-Qur'an Reading Skills on Perjuangan Street

The *Maghrib Mengaji* program on Perjuangan Street, Medan Sunggal, represents a structured community-based effort to improve children's Al-Qur'an reading skills in response to declining Qur'anic literacy among younger generations. The primary focus of this program is to enhance children's technical ability to read the Al-Qur'an accurately and fluently, including mastery of Hijaiyah letters, reading Iqra', proper pronunciation of Qur'anic verses, and consistent application of tajwid rules. These objectives are aligned with the broader educational aim of strengthening children's religious understanding and integrating Qur'anic values into their daily behavior. Qur'anic reading in this context is viewed not merely as a ritual practice but as an educational process that supports moral development, discipline, and character formation (Julaeha, 2018).

The implementation of the *Maghrib Mengaji* program is carried out routinely every day before and after Maghrib prayers in local mosques and prayer rooms along Perjuangan Street, with Al-Muawannah Mosque functioning as one of the main centers of activity. Observations show that children arrive at the mosque in the late afternoon, bringing their Iqra' books and Al-Qur'an mushafs, and prepare for learning activities conducted in a clean, orderly, and comfortable environment. Learning sessions are organized in a structured yet flexible manner, allowing instruction to be adjusted to the varied abilities of participants. Children at the beginner level receive guidance in recognizing and pronouncing Hijaiyah letters and reading Iqra', while

those at more advanced levels focus on fluent Qur'anic recitation, correction of makhraj, application of tajwid rules, Arabic letter writing practice, and memorization of short surahs.

Instruction is delivered by local Qur'an teachers who possess experience in children's religious education and who apply a patient, persuasive, and supportive pedagogical approach. Teachers not only emphasize technical accuracy in reading the Al-Qur'an but also integrate moral instruction by modeling polite behavior, discipline, respect for elders, and attentiveness during learning activities (Faelasup et al., 2025). This learning atmosphere creates a sense of comfort and emotional safety that encourages children to participate actively and consistently. The participatory nature of the program, involving mosque administrators, parents, and the wider community, strengthens the social foundation of the learning process and reinforces the role of the mosque as a center of non-formal Islamic education, as highlighted in previous studies on mosque-based learning (Sugestian, Syafei, & Fakhrudin, 2018).

The findings of this study indicate a significant improvement in children's Al-Qur'an reading skills as a result of regular participation in the *Maghrib Mengaji* program. Children who initially experienced difficulties in recognizing Hijaiyah letters gradually demonstrated progress in reading Iqra' and short Qur'anic verses with greater fluency and confidence. Participants who were already able to read the Al-Qur'an showed measurable improvement in the accuracy of pronunciation, clarity of makhraj, and consistency in applying tajwid rules. These improvements are closely linked to the habit of repeated and continuous Qur'anic reading, which helps children develop structured learning routines and strengthens their confidence when reciting the Al-Qur'an in front of teachers and peers. This finding supports research indicating that routine Maghrib-based Qur'anic activities can enhance children's motivation to learn and reduce their dependence on digital entertainment (Marlina et al., 2021).

The *Maghrib Mengaji* program also plays an important role in shaping children's religious character alongside improving their reading skills. Regular involvement in Qur'anic recitation activities trains children to manage their time effectively, particularly during the evening period, and encourages the formation of early worship habits. Interaction between teachers and learners fosters an educational relationship that allows children to internalize religious values through observation and imitation of teachers' behavior. Values such as patience, discipline, togetherness, mutual respect, and social responsibility develop naturally through group learning and shared religious activities (Yati Emilawati et al., 2025). This finding reinforces the argument that habitual engagement with the Al-Qur'an contributes significantly to character education and the internalization of Islamic values among children (Julaeha, 2018).

Despite its positive outcomes, the implementation of the *Maghrib Mengaji* program on Perjuangan Street also faces several contextual challenges that influence its effectiveness. The limited number of Qur'an teachers remains a major obstacle, particularly as the number of participating children continues to increase. Differences in children's levels of ability within the same learning group require teachers to provide more individualized guidance, which is difficult to achieve under conditions of limited human resources. Social and technological influences further affect children's consistency and focus during learning activities. Children who are accustomed to frequent gadget use tend to show reduced concentration during Qur'anic learning sessions, especially when parental supervision is limited. This condition aligns with previous findings that excessive gadget use negatively impacts children's interest in reading the Al-Qur'an (Marsinah & Nurhasanah, 2023). Limitations in supporting learning facilities and instructional media also pose challenges in accommodating all participants effectively. The availability of learning aids, Qur'anic texts, and appropriate learning spaces influences the quality of instruction and children's engagement in learning activities. These challenges highlight the importance of strengthening collaboration between Qur'an teachers, mosque

administrators, parents, and the wider community to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the program. Strengthened parental involvement is particularly crucial in supporting children's consistency in attendance and in regulating their use of digital technology at home (Dedek Nursiti Khodijah Nursiti Khodijah et al., 2023).

The findings of this study overall demonstrate that the *Maghrib Mengaji* program on Perjuangan Street, Medan Sunggal, constitutes an effective community-based strategy for improving children's Al-Qur'an reading skills while simultaneously fostering their religious character. The success of the program is supported by routine implementation, adaptive teaching strategies, and strong community involvement. At the same time, addressing challenges related to human resources, learning facilities, and technological influences is essential to enhance the long-term impact of the program. These findings confirm that *Maghrib Mengaji* serves as a relevant and contextual response to contemporary challenges in Qur'anic education and contributes meaningfully to the strengthening of Al-Qur'an literacy among children in urban community settings (Khoirurrizki & Bustam, 2022).

Conclusion

The results of this study show that the *Maghrib Mengaji* program on Perjuangan Street, Medan Sunggal, represents an effective community-based effort to improve children's Al-Qur'an reading skills. The program contributes significantly to the development of children's technical reading abilities, including recognition of Hijaiyah letters, fluency in reading Iqra' and Qur'anic verses, accuracy of makhraj, and proper application of tajwid rules, which are achieved through regular and structured learning activities conducted in local mosques and prayer rooms. The effectiveness of the program is supported by adaptive instructional strategies, the active role of patient and committed Qur'an teachers, and the involvement of mosque administrators, parents, and the surrounding community in creating a supportive learning environment. In addition to improving reading skills, the *Maghrib Mengaji* program also plays an important role in fostering children's religious character by developing discipline, consistent worship habits, mutual respect, and a sense of togetherness. Despite these positive outcomes, the program faces several challenges, including limited numbers of teachers, variations in children's learning abilities, insufficient learning facilities, and the influence of digital technology on children's concentration and attendance. Therefore, strengthening collaboration among educators, parents, mosque management, and the community is essential to enhance the sustainability and long-term impact of the *Maghrib Mengaji* program as a model of non-formal Islamic education for improving children's Al-Qur'an literacy in urban community settings.

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