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## LITERACY-TAHFIZH SYNERGY AND STUDENT RELIGIOSITY AT SMPIT NURUL AZMI MEDAN

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### Abstrak

Religiusitas siswa merupakan salah satu tujuan penting pendidikan Islam, tetapi pembentukannya tidak cukup dilakukan melalui pembelajaran teoritis di kelas. Di banyak sekolah Islam, program literasi dan tahfizh telah dijalankan, namun kajian yang secara khusus menelaah sinergi keduanya dalam membentuk religiusitas siswa masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi program literasi dan tahfizh, bentuk sinergi di antara keduanya, serta kontribusinya terhadap pembentukan religiusitas siswa di SMPIT Nurul Azmi Medan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus deskriptif. Informan penelitian terdiri atas 12 orang, yaitu kepala sekolah, guru, dan siswa yang dipilih secara purposive. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi selama tiga bulan, kemudian dianalisis melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sinergi program literasi dan tahfizh diwujudkan melalui pembiasaan membaca, menghafal, dan mengulang Al-Qur'an secara terstruktur dalam kegiatan sekolah. Sinergi ini berkontribusi pada penguatan keterlibatan siswa dalam aktivitas keagamaan, peningkatan kebiasaan membaca, serta pembentukan perilaku religius di lingkungan sekolah. Dukungan sekolah, peran guru, dan pembiasaan harian menjadi faktor penguat utama, meskipun konsistensi pelaksanaan masih menghadapi beberapa kendala. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi literasi dan tahfizh berpotensi menjadi strategi pedagogis dalam memperkuat religiusitas siswa di sekolah Islam.

**Kata Kunci:** Literasi Sekolah; Tahfizh Al-Qur'an; Religiusitas Siswa; Pendidikan Islam; Studi Kasus

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### Abstract

Student religiosity is a central objective of Islamic education, yet its formation cannot be achieved through classroom instruction alone. Although literacy and tahfizh programs have been implemented in many Islamic schools, limited research has specifically examined how the synergy between the two contributes to the development of student religiosity. This study aims to analyze the implementation of literacy and tahfizh programs, the forms of synergy between them, and their contribution to student religiosity at SMPIT Nurul Azmi Medan. The study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. The participants consisted of 12 informants, including the principal, teachers, and students, selected purposively based on their involvement in the programs. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation over a three-month period, and were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that the synergy between literacy and tahfizh was institutionalized through structured routines of reading, memorizing, and reviewing the Qur'an in daily school activities. This synergy contributed to stronger student engagement in religious practices, improved reading habits, and the development of religious behavior within the school environment. School support, teacher mediation, and daily habituation emerged as the main enabling factors, although challenges remained in sustaining implementation consistency. These findings suggest that the integration of literacy and tahfizh can serve as a pedagogical strategy for strengthening student religiosity in Islamic schooling.

**Keywords:** *School Literacy; Qur'anic Memorization; Student Religiosity; Islamic Education; Case Study*

### INTRODUCTION

The formation of student religiosity remains a central concern in Islamic education, particularly in schools that aim to integrate academic learning with the cultivation of religious values. In practice, however, this goal is not easily achieved. Many students still show limited engagement with reading activities, while the internalization of religious values often depends heavily on formal classroom instruction rather than on sustained educational routines. Literacy is widely regarded as a foundational



competence that supports comprehension, critical reflection, and the acquisition of knowledge, including in religious learning contexts (Rohman et al., 2022; Wahyuni et al., 2023). In the Islamic intellectual tradition, the importance of literacy is deeply rooted in the first revelation, especially in the command iqra' in Q. Al-'Alaq 96:1-5, which emphasizes reading and writing as foundational acts in the pursuit of knowledge (Heri, n.d.; Mansyah et al., 2024). At the same time, tahfizh programs have become increasingly prominent in Islamic schools as a means of strengthening students' attachment to the Qur'an through memorization, repetition, and disciplined practice (Utami, 2024; Saputra et al., 2025). Academically, this issue is important because it concerns how school programs shape religiosity through educational practice rather than doctrine alone. Practically, it is important because Islamic schools require concrete strategies to build students' reading habits, Qur'anic engagement, and religious behavior in everyday school life.

As Allah SWT says in QS. Al-'Alaq verses 1-5:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (١) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (٢) اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ  
الْأَكْرَمُ (٣) الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (٤) عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (٥)

Meaning: "Read with (say) the name of God who created. He created man from all blood. Bacala, and God the Most High. Who teaches man with a pen. He teaches man what is not known."

A growing body of research has examined literacy and tahfizh as important elements of Islamic schooling, but these domains are still often treated separately. Studies on literacy in schools generally focus on reading habits, reading comprehension, and students' engagement with texts as foundations of learning and critical thinking (Fadli et al., 2024; Rohman et al., 2022; Ayu & Sari, 2026). Meanwhile, research on tahfizh education tends to emphasize memorization strategies, teacher roles, disciplined repetition, and the formation of religious character through structured Qur'anic engagement (Alifa et al., 2025; Wahan & Aulia, 2024; Rahma & Naziyah, 2025). These studies are valuable, yet they reveal a significant limitation. Most previous research has not sufficiently explored how literacy and tahfizh are institutionally and pedagogically integrated in daily school practice. Literacy is typically framed as an academic competency, while tahfizh is positioned as a spiritual or devotional activity. As a result, the concept of "synergy" between the two often remains assumed rather than clearly analyzed. Existing studies have not adequately explained how



reading, understanding, memorizing, and repetition are linked in the school environment, nor how this interaction contributes to the formation of student religiosity. This gap makes it necessary to investigate the practical and conceptual relationship between literacy and tahfizh in Islamic schooling.

This study responds to that limitation by examining the synergy between literacy and tahfizh programs in SMPIT Nurul Azmi Medan. Rather than discussing literacy and tahfizh as two parallel programs, this research focuses on how they are implemented, connected, and experienced within the everyday life of the school. The study specifically aims to analyze three interrelated issues. First, it examines the implementation of literacy and tahfizh programs in the school context. Second, it identifies the forms of synergy that connect reading, memorization, repetition, and religious habituation in school-based learning activities. Third, it explores the contribution of this synergy to the formation of student religiosity. This focus is important because student religiosity in educational contexts is not merely a theological or abstract matter, but is often expressed through patterned practices, teacher guidance, and school routines (Pohan et al., 2025; Rahma & Naziyah, 2025). By using a qualitative case study approach, this study seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of how program integration works in practice and how it contributes to the development of students' religious dispositions. In doing so, the study is expected to provide an empirical contribution to Islamic education research and a contextual understanding of religious character formation through school-based programs.

This study is based on the argument that literacy and tahfizh can strengthen student religiosity when they are implemented not as separate activities, but as interconnected and structured educational practices. The provisional answer proposed in this article is that literacy functions as a gateway to Qur'anic engagement by familiarizing students with reading, comprehension, and meaning-making, while tahfizh deepens this engagement through memorization, repetition, and disciplined internalization (Mansyah et al., 2024; Alifa et al., 2025). When both programs are aligned through school policy, teacher mediation, and daily habituation, they may contribute to the formation of religious routines, stronger attachment to the Qur'an, and more consistent religious behavior among students. This argument is also supported by broader educational discussions showing that literacy practices can shape habitual behavior and reflective engagement, while religious literacy may reinforce ethical orientation and religiosity when connected to sustained practice (Mensah



et al., 2024; Gu & Kim, 2025). Thus, this study does not assume that synergy automatically occurs simply because both programs exist in one school. Instead, it argues that synergy is produced through intentional institutional design and pedagogical mediation. On that basis, this research examines how the interaction between literacy and tahfizh becomes a meaningful mechanism for shaping student religiosity at SMPIT Nurul Azmi Medan.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent scholarship has increasingly addressed literacy, tahfizh, and religiosity as important dimensions of Islamic schooling, yet the relationship among these aspects remains only partially examined. In general, previous studies can be mapped into at least three major tendencies. First, a substantial body of research focuses on school literacy as a means of improving reading ability, comprehension, and students' critical engagement with texts (Rohman et al., 2022; Fadli et al., 2024; Ayu & Sari, 2026). Second, another group of studies emphasizes tahfizh education as a structured process of Qur'anic memorization, discipline, and spiritual formation supported by teacher guidance and institutional management (Utami, 2024; Alifa et al., 2025; Saputra et al., 2025). Third, a more limited but growing literature examines religiosity and religious literacy as behavioral and educational outcomes shaped by repeated engagement with sacred texts, institutional routines, and pedagogical mediation (Rahma & Naziyah, 2025; Mensah et al., 2024; Gu & Kim, 2025). Although these tendencies provide valuable insights, they often remain segmented. Literacy is typically treated as an academic competency, tahfizh as a devotional practice, and religiosity as an outcome variable, with insufficient explanation of how these domains interact within everyday school life. This segmented pattern provides the basis for a more integrative review.

The first tendency in the literature examines literacy as a school-based practice concerned with reading habits, text comprehension, and the development of reflective thinking. In this line of research, literacy is not merely defined as the technical ability to read and write, but as a broader educational process through which students access, interpret, and use information meaningfully (Wahyuni et al., 2023; Rohman et al., 2022). Many studies in this category focus on literacy movements in schools, including structured reading activities, teacher facilitation, and the availability of reading resources as mechanisms for improving students' reading interest and comprehension (Fadli et al., 2024; K & Dahlan, 2025). Some authors further argue that literacy contributes to critical interpretation and



meaning-making by enabling students to evaluate texts and connect reading to everyday learning contexts (Ayu & Sari, 2026). Within Islamic educational settings, literacy may also extend to engagement with religious texts, including Qur'anic reading and Islamic literature, thereby giving literacy both cognitive and moral significance (Mansyah et al., 2024). However, most of these studies remain focused on literacy outcomes such as reading proficiency, reading interest, or comprehension, and pay limited attention to how literacy may interact with other religious programs in shaping students' religious dispositions.

The second tendency centers on tahfizh as a pedagogical and spiritual process of memorizing the Qur'an through repetition, discipline, and guided practice. Studies in this stream generally conceptualize tahfizh as more than a mnemonic exercise; it is understood as a formative activity that builds persistence, responsibility, and emotional attachment to the Qur'an (Utami, 2024; Alifa et al., 2025). Several researchers emphasize the importance of teacher strategies, regular muroja'ah, and school-based management in sustaining memorization quality and student motivation (Saputra et al., 2025; Wahan & Aulia, 2024). Other works show that tahfizh programs may contribute to the development of religious character by habituating students to regular Qur'anic engagement and worship-related discipline (Rahma & Naziyah, 2025). In this thematic orientation, the dominant concepts include memorization strategies, spiritual discipline, character formation, and teacher mediation. Methodologically, these studies often rely on descriptive qualitative approaches or program evaluations that document implementation practices and perceived outcomes. Nevertheless, the literature in this area mostly treats tahfizh as a stand-alone religious program. It rarely considers how memorization may be pedagogically connected to literacy activities such as reading, understanding, and interpreting texts within a broader educational design.

The third tendency includes studies that examine religious literacy, student religiosity, and school-based religious formation as outcomes of repeated engagement with sacred texts and institutional routines. This body of literature is more conceptual and interpretive, often focusing on religiosity as lived practice rather than merely doctrinal knowledge (Ammerman, 2016; Jackson, 2014). In educational contexts, religiosity is frequently discussed in relation to worship habits, disciplined conduct, moral behavior, and students' engagement with religious texts (Pohan et al., 2025; Rahma & Naziyah, 2025). Research beyond the Indonesian context also suggests that religious literacy may be positively associated with religiosity because structured interaction with sacred texts fosters identity



formation and ethical orientation (Mensah et al., 2024; Gu & Kim, 2025). Scholars of moral and religious education further argue that repeated routines and school culture are central to shaping character because they transform abstract values into embodied practice (Arthur, 2003; Cooling, 2010). While this tendency is useful for understanding student religiosity as a process shaped by school experiences, it often operates at the level of broad theoretical framing. It pays less attention to how specific school programs – such as literacy and tahfizh – are integrated institutionally and pedagogically as mutually reinforcing mechanisms within daily educational life.

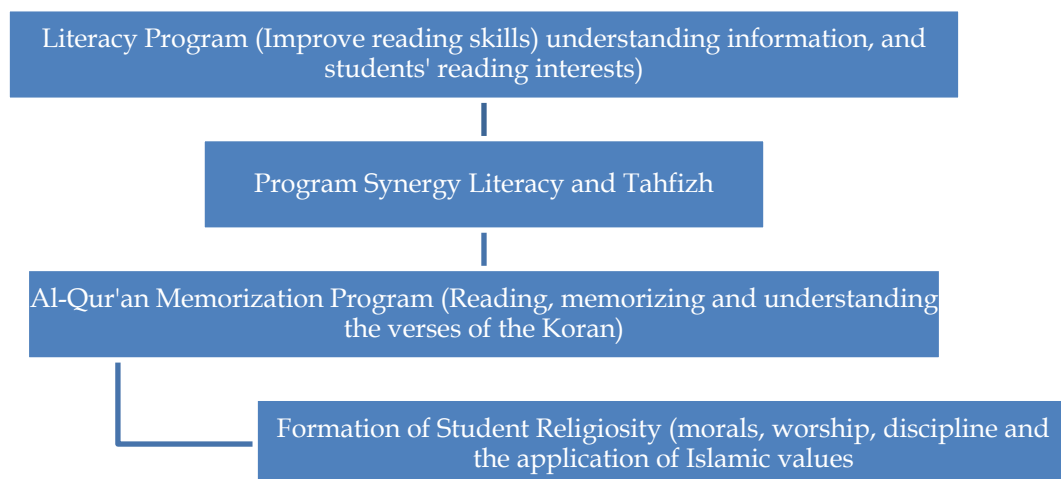
Despite their contributions, these three tendencies leave an important analytical gap. Research on literacy tends to emphasize academic reading outcomes, while studies on tahfizh focus on memorization and religious discipline, and broader discussions of religiosity often remain conceptual or outcome-oriented. What these strands of literature largely overlook is the institutional and pedagogical interaction between literacy and tahfizh as coexisting school programs. In other words, previous studies have not sufficiently explained how reading, understanding, memorizing, and repetition are intentionally connected within the school environment, nor how this connection contributes to the formation of student religiosity. The existing literature often assumes that literacy supports tahfizh or that tahfizh naturally strengthens religious character, but the mechanisms of that relationship are rarely made explicit. This means that the notion of “synergy” is frequently invoked descriptively without being analytically clarified. Moreover, limited attention has been given to the role of school policy, teacher mediation, and daily habituation in producing such synergy. As a result, previous scholarship has not adequately captured how integrated educational design may shape students’ religious routines and dispositions in Islamic schooling. This overlooked dimension constitutes the novelty space for the present study.

In response to this gap, the present study proposes a more integrated perspective by examining literacy and tahfizh not as separate domains, but as interconnected educational practices that jointly contribute to the formation of student religiosity. This study directs attention to the school as an institutional setting in which reading, memorization, repetition, and religious habituation are aligned through policy, pedagogy, and routine. The focus is therefore not only on whether literacy and tahfizh exist in the same school, but on how their interaction is intentionally constructed and how students experience that interaction in everyday educational life. Conceptually, this study approaches synergy as a process of pedagogical



and institutional alignment rather than mere coexistence. Through this perspective, literacy is understood as facilitating access, familiarity, and meaning-making in relation to religious texts, while tahfizh strengthens retention, discipline, and internalization through repeated practice. By combining these dimensions, the study seeks to explain how student religiosity may emerge through structured engagement with the Qur'an in a school environment. This orientation provides a new analytical direction for Islamic education research by linking literacy, tahfizh, and religiosity within a single contextual and process-based framework.

**Figure 1: Framework of Thinking**



## RESEARCH METHODS

This study focused on the synergy between literacy and tahfizh programs in shaping student religiosity at SMPIT Nurul Azmi Medan. The unit of analysis was the school as an institutional and pedagogical setting in which literacy practices, Qur'anic memorization activities, teacher mediation, and students' religious routines interacted within everyday educational life. More specifically, the study examined how these programs were organized, implemented, and experienced by school actors in the context of an integrated Islamic school. To address this focus, the study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. A qualitative orientation was considered appropriate because the research



aimed to understand meanings, practices, and interactions in their natural context rather than to test variables statistically. The case study design enabled an in-depth exploration of a bounded educational setting in which literacy and tahfizh were implemented simultaneously as part of school culture and daily routines. This design also allowed the researchers to investigate contextual processes, institutional alignment, and forms of interaction surrounding program implementation in a real school environment (Mansyah et al., 2024).

The data sources in this study consisted of primary and supporting data. Primary data were obtained from 12 informants, namely the principal, teachers, and students who were directly involved in the implementation of literacy and tahfizh programs. Informants were selected purposively based on their relevance to the research focus and their direct experience with the programs. Supporting data were obtained from school documents, including activity schedules, school records, and archives related to literacy and tahfizh implementation. Data were collected through observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted for three months, two to three times per week, to examine the implementation of the programs and the interactions that occurred within them. Interviews were guided by research-focused questions concerning program implementation, forms of synergy, and the construction of student religiosity. Documentation was used to corroborate observational and interview data (Mansyah et al., 2024). Data were analyzed through an interactive thematic process involving data collection, data reduction, coding, data display, and conclusion drawing (Mansyah et al., 2024). To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied source and method triangulation, member checking, reflexive awareness during analysis, and ethical procedures such as informed consent, confidentiality, and the use of data exclusively for academic purposes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### Literacy as a Structured Religious Routine

Classroom observations revealed that literacy activities at SMPIT Nurul Azmi Medan were conducted consistently every morning before formal lessons began. These activities included collective reading of the Qur'an and selected Islamic texts under teacher supervision. Teachers explained that the literacy routine was not designed merely to improve reading ability, but to create students' daily closeness to religious texts. One teacher stated, "Reading here is not only to improve comprehension. It is meant to build closeness with the Qur'an every day." Students also



confirmed the habitual nature of the program, as one participant remarked, "We read the Qur'an every morning, so it has become a habit." Documentary evidence from the school schedule further showed that literacy activities had been formally integrated into the daily program. Restated more clearly, the literacy program functioned not simply as a technical reading session, but as an organized religious practice embedded in the rhythm of school life. Three patterns can be identified from these data: literacy was scheduled regularly, linked to Islamic texts, and perceived by participants as part of spiritual habituation rather than as a purely academic exercise.

The observation data further indicate that literacy activities served as an entry point for students' engagement with the Qur'an and Islamic values. Teachers reported that repeated reading activities gradually increased students' familiarity with Qur'anic language, reading confidence, and willingness to participate in religious learning. Students did not simply read mechanically; they were directed to read aloud, listen attentively, and remain disciplined throughout the session. In this respect, literacy was positioned as both a cognitive and behavioral routine. What was seen in classrooms suggests that regular reading activities helped establish a common religious atmosphere before formal instruction began. Restated simply, literacy was used to prepare students not only intellectually, but also spiritually, for the school day. Four tendencies emerged from this result. First, literacy functioned as a daily opening ritual. Second, the texts used were predominantly religious in nature. Third, teacher guidance shaped how literacy was practiced and understood. Fourth, repeated reading fostered both discipline and familiarity with the Qur'an. These tendencies show that literacy in this school extended beyond reading skills and became part of the institutional formation of religious conduct.

However, the findings also reveal variation in how students engaged with the literacy program. While some students participated enthusiastically and appeared internally motivated, others joined more procedurally and still required teacher prompting. Observations suggested that the level of student engagement depended on classroom atmosphere, teacher encouragement, and the consistency of implementation across days. In some sessions, students displayed active reading and attentiveness; in others, participation appeared more routine than reflective. This indicates that although literacy had been institutionalized, its impact was not uniform among all students. Restated in analytical terms, the literacy program had already become a school routine, but the depth of student internalization remained uneven. At least three patterns are evident. First,



literacy had successfully moved from isolated activity to institutional habit. Second, student participation varied in intensity and meaning. Third, the role of teachers remained central in transforming reading from obligation into religious engagement. Thus, the first major result of this study is that literacy at SMPIT Nurul Azmi Medan functioned as a structured and religiously meaningful routine, although its internalization differed across students.

### ***Tahfizh* as Repetitive Discipline and Internalization**

The second major finding concerns the implementation of the *tahfizh* program as a disciplined and repetitive spiritual practice. Field observations showed that *tahfizh* activities were carried out through a regular schedule involving memorization, recitation, and review sessions. These practices were not incidental but formed part of the school's organized religious program. The *tahfizh* teacher explained that students were required to add and maintain memorization every day, emphasizing continuity rather than occasional achievement. As stated by the teacher, students were expected to be disciplined in both adding new memorization and preserving previously memorized verses. Students also acknowledged the demanding nature of the process, as one of them stated, "Sometimes it is difficult, but you have to keep memorizing." Restated more simply, *tahfizh* in this school was not treated as a supplementary activity but as a routine discipline that required persistence, repetition, and responsibility. Three clear tendencies emerged from this evidence. First, *tahfizh* relied on regular repetition rather than short-term memorization. Second, students understood memorization as a demanding but necessary responsibility. Third, teacher supervision was central in sustaining students' discipline and consistency in the memorization process.

The *tahfizh* program is implemented through regular memorization and review activities. The Tahfidz Teacher, Raudahatuz Zahra stated that students are required to be disciplined in adding to and maintaining memorization every day. Students also expressed, sometimes it's difficult, but you have to keep memorizing. Observations revealed a specific *tahfizh* schedule that was consistently carried out. These findings indicate that *tahfizh* is not just a memorization activity, but a spiritual practice that requires discipline and consistency. This process shapes the students' internal religiosity through repeated practice. *Tahfizh* complements literacy by deepening students' engagement with the Quran, not only through reading but also through memorizing and internalizing its meaning. This indicates that students' religiosity is formed through the practice of discipline, responsibility, and emotional closeness to the Quran. However,



not all students are able to achieve memorization targets easily. Some students feel the burden of maintaining consistent memorization, indicating varying abilities and responses to the program.

Further analysis indicates that the *tahfizh* program contributed not only to memorization ability, but also to the internal formation of students' religious habits. Through repeated memorization and review, students were trained to develop discipline, patience, and emotional attachment to the Qur'an. Observations suggested that many students became accustomed to handling verses carefully, repeating them consistently, and connecting memorization with their daily worship routines. This means that *tahfizh* functioned as more than a cognitive exercise; it also became a mechanism of religious habituation. Students' interaction with the Qur'an was deepened through repetition, which transformed memorization into a lived and embodied practice. Four patterns are visible here. First, repetition produced regularity in religious engagement. Second, *tahfizh* encouraged responsibility for maintaining memorization. Third, memorization practices reinforced students' emotional closeness to the Qur'an. Fourth, the process linked academic schooling with spiritual discipline. In restated form, the *tahfizh* program shaped religiosity through repeated and disciplined practice rather than through abstract instruction alone. This finding confirms that memorization was closely tied to the cultivation of religious behavior in the school environment.

At the same time, the findings reveal that students' responses to the *tahfizh* program were not uniform. Some students were able to maintain memorization targets consistently, while others struggled with the demands of repetition and continuity. Teachers noted that differences in motivation, memory strength, and daily discipline influenced students' performance. Observations further suggested that some students engaged in *tahfizh* with a strong sense of purpose, whereas others perceived it as a burdensome requirement. This variation is important because it shows that *tahfizh*, although institutionally structured, was experienced differently by individual students. Restated analytically, the program provided a common religious framework, but the degree of internalization was mediated by students' personal capacities and responses. Three tendencies stand out. First, *tahfizh* created a shared discipline across the school. Second, students' capacity to meet memorization targets varied considerably. Third, the success of *tahfizh* depended not only on institutional design but also on individual student motivation and endurance. Therefore, the second major result demonstrates that *tahfizh* functioned as a disciplined spiritual



practice, but one whose effects differed according to students' varying levels of engagement and ability.

### **Program Synergy and the Formation of Student Religiosity**

The third major finding concerns the synergy between literacy and *tahfizh* as an intentional institutional strategy rather than a coincidental overlap of two programs. The principal explicitly stated that the integration of literacy and *tahfizh* was designed to cultivate students' religious character. This indicates that the synergy was embedded at the level of school policy and vision. Teachers also explained that reading activities were intentionally linked to memorization so that students would not only decode texts, but also understand and internalize them. Observational data confirmed this linkage: in some sessions, teachers asked students to read verses, explain their meaning, and then continue with memorization activities. Restated simply, literacy and *tahfizh* were connected through an educational sequence that moved from reading to understanding and then to memorization. Three major tendencies can be identified. First, the synergy was supported structurally by school policy. Second, teachers acted as mediators who linked literacy and memorization in practice. Third, the integration of both programs created a more coherent pattern of Qur'anic engagement for students. Thus, synergy in this school was not merely rhetorical, but enacted through institutional and pedagogical mechanisms.

The principal, Muhammad Ramadoni, S.Pd.I., articulated that the integration of literacy and *tahfizh* programs is a deliberate institutional strategy designed to cultivate students' religious character. This statement positions synergy not as an incidental overlap between two initiatives, but as a structurally embedded policy orientation. In this sense, institutional vision operates as the foundational layer that enables program alignment. From a pedagogical perspective, Umayyah, S.Pd., explained that reading activities are intentionally linked to memorization practices so that students are encouraged to move beyond textual decoding toward comprehension and internalization. This linkage illustrates that literacy is framed not merely as a technical skill, but as a cognitive gateway supporting deeper Qur'anic engagement. *Tahfizh*, in turn, reinforces this engagement through repetition and disciplined practice.

Observational data further confirm that teachers actively mediate this integration. During classroom sessions, teachers frequently asked students to explain the meaning of verses before proceeding with memorization, thereby connecting interpretive understanding with repetitive recall. Such practices reveal that synergy is enacted through pedagogical intervention rather than occurring automatically.



Theoretically, this finding supports the argument that program integration requires mediating agents. Institutional policy establishes the structural framework, but teacher agency operationalizes the interaction between literacy and *tahfizh*. Teachers function as interpretive bridges who transform parallel activities into a coherent pedagogical process. Thus, synergy emerges as a mediated mechanism involving three interconnected layers: institutional policy (structural alignment), teacher mediation (pedagogical linkage), and student engagement (habitual internalization). Without teacher mediation, literacy and *tahfizh* would likely remain parallel programs rather than mutually reinforcing processes in the formation of student religiosity.

This synergy was reflected in observable changes in students' religious behavior within the school environment. Teachers reported that students showed greater consistency in daily prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and respectful conduct toward peers and teachers. Students themselves acknowledged becoming more accustomed to reading and memorizing the Qur'an as part of their daily routine. Observation in classrooms and school spaces also revealed increased recitation outside formal sessions and stronger participation in religious activities. These findings indicate that religiosity in this setting was not formed through doctrinal instruction alone, but through repeated educational practices supported by the interaction of literacy and *tahfizh*. Restated for clarity, student religiosity emerged through routine engagement with the Qur'an in multiple forms: reading, memorizing, repeating, and practicing religious discipline. Four patterns emerge from this result. First, the synergy strengthened students' Qur'anic engagement. Second, it contributed to the habituation of religious routines. Third, it reinforced moral behavior in everyday school life. Fourth, religiosity was expressed behaviorally rather than only cognitively. These patterns suggest that the synergy of the two programs functioned as a pathway toward lived religiosity in the school context.

Nevertheless, the data also show that the effect of program synergy was not entirely uniform or automatic. While many students demonstrated stronger religious routines and attachment to the Qur'an, others appeared to participate more formally than deeply. Teachers recognized that personal motivation, peer influence, family support, and consistency of school implementation affected how students responded to the integrated programs. This means that the synergy between literacy and *tahfizh* operated as a facilitating structure rather than a deterministic mechanism. Restated analytically, the school created conditions for the growth of religiosity, but the extent of students' internalization depended on how they



negotiated these routines within their own developmental and social contexts. Three concluding tendencies can be identified. First, synergy provided a structured opportunity for religious habituation. Second, student religiosity developed gradually and unevenly. Third, the outcomes of integration were mediated by institutional, interpersonal, and individual factors. Therefore, the third result of this study confirms that the synergy between literacy and *tahfizh* contributed to the formation of student religiosity, but its impact remained shaped by variation in student engagement and contextual support.

### Discussion

This study examined how the synergy between literacy and tahfizh programs contributes to the formation of student religiosity at SMPIT Nurul Azmi Medan. The findings show that literacy in this school functions not only as an academic practice but also as a structured religious routine through the daily reading of the Qur'an and Islamic texts. At the same time, the tahfizh program operates as a disciplined spiritual practice based on repetition, memorization, and review. More importantly, the study found that the relationship between these two programs is not incidental. Their synergy is institutionally supported by school policy and pedagogically mediated by teachers, who connect reading, understanding, memorization, and habituation in everyday school activities. As a result, student religiosity is shaped through repeated practices that encourage Qur'anic engagement, religious discipline, and moral behavior within the school environment. These findings confirm that the integration of literacy and tahfizh can be understood as a process of educational alignment through which reading and memorization reinforce one another in the development of students' religious dispositions. In this sense, the study extends previous discussions on Islamic schooling by showing how program integration contributes to lived religiosity rather than merely formal religious instruction (Mansyah et al., 2024; Rahma & Naziyah, 2025; Pohan et al., 2025).

The relationship identified in this study can be explained through the interaction between cognitive engagement, disciplined repetition, and institutional habituation. Literacy provides students with regular exposure to Qur'anic and Islamic texts, thereby strengthening familiarity, comprehension, and reading confidence. Tahfizh deepens this engagement by requiring students to repeat, retain, and preserve the verses they encounter. The synergy becomes effective because literacy and memorization are not practiced in isolation; instead, both are embedded in daily routines and reinforced by teacher mediation. This explains why student religiosity in this school appears to develop through practice rather



than through abstract doctrinal teaching alone. The findings suggest that religiosity is strengthened when reading becomes meaningful, memorization becomes disciplined, and both are connected through routine educational experiences. This interpretation is consistent with studies showing that literacy contributes to understanding and reflective thinking (Rohman et al., 2022; Wahyuni et al., 2023), while tahfizh shapes discipline, responsibility, and spiritual attachment through repetitive engagement with the Qur'an (Alifa et al., 2025; Wahan & Aulia, 2024). The results also support the view that repeated interaction with religious texts can reinforce students' affective and behavioral religious development when supported by structured educational practice (Mensah et al., 2024; Gu & Kim, 2025).

In comparison with previous studies, the present findings show both continuity and difference. Similar to earlier research, this study confirms that literacy programs can support comprehension, reading habits, and school-based learning development (Fadli et al., 2024; K & Dahlan, 2025), and that tahfizh programs contribute to memorization quality, discipline, and the strengthening of religious character (Saputra et al., 2025; Alifa et al., 2025; Rahma & Naziyah, 2025). However, the distinctive contribution of this study lies in its focus on the institutional and pedagogical integration of literacy and tahfizh as mutually reinforcing processes. Previous scholarship has tended to discuss literacy and tahfizh separately, either as academic support or as spiritual formation. By contrast, this study demonstrates that the interaction between the two can be intentionally structured in school life through policy, teacher guidance, and daily routines. This constitutes the novelty of the study. Rather than merely showing that both programs are beneficial, the findings explain how their synergy operates as a mechanism for shaping religiosity. In this respect, the study moves beyond outcome-oriented discussions and offers a process-based understanding of how integrated Islamic educational practices influence students' religious development in everyday school contexts (Mansyah et al., 2024; Pohan et al., 2025).

The meaning of these findings can be interpreted more broadly within the social and ideological context of Islamic schooling. In contemporary education, literacy is often associated with academic achievement, whereas tahfizh is commonly treated as a devotional or spiritual practice. The present study shows that in an Islamic school setting, these two domains do not have to remain separate. Instead, they may be combined to produce an educational environment in which reading is not only epistemic but also devotional, and memorization is not only ritual but also pedagogical. This has important implications for how student



religiosity is understood. Religiosity in this case is not merely an individual belief or abstract theological position, but a socially formed disposition shaped through routines, school culture, and sustained engagement with sacred texts. This interpretation resonates with broader discussions of lived religion, which emphasize that religious life is expressed through everyday practices and patterned behaviors rather than through doctrine alone (Ammerman, 2016). It also aligns with educational perspectives that view religious and moral character as the result of habituation, institutional design, and pedagogical repetition (Arthur, 2003; Cooling, 2010; Jackson, 2014). Thus, the study highlights the social construction of religiosity within Islamic educational practice.

These findings also invite reflection on both the functional and dysfunctional implications of the program synergy. Functionally, the integration of literacy and tahfizh strengthens students' attachment to the Qur'an, creates regular religious routines, and supports the formation of discipline, respect, and school-based religious behavior. It also provides teachers with a practical pedagogical framework for linking reading, comprehension, memorization, and moral guidance. However, the results also reveal potential limitations. Not all students internalize the programs at the same depth, and some may participate only procedurally rather than meaningfully. In addition, the strong emphasis on religious texts in literacy sessions may reduce exposure to broader forms of reading that are also important for educational development (Baso & Banna, 2020; Muhammad Riza, 2023). This suggests that while program synergy has considerable formative power, it may also produce uneven outcomes depending on student motivation, teacher mediation, and the surrounding social context. Such variation is consistent with research indicating that adolescent religious development is shaped by multiple ecological influences, including school, family, peers, and individual disposition (King & Boyatzis, 2015). Therefore, the synergy between literacy and tahfizh should be understood as a facilitating structure whose benefits depend on the quality of implementation and the responsiveness of students themselves.

From a policy and practical perspective, the findings suggest that Islamic schools should move beyond treating literacy and tahfizh as separate programs and instead design them as integrated components of character and religiosity formation. School leaders need to ensure that institutional policies explicitly connect reading activities, Qur'anic memorization, and daily religious routines in a coherent educational framework. Teachers should also be supported through training that enables them to mediate the relationship between literacy and tahfizh,



particularly by linking reading with interpretation, reflection, and disciplined repetition (Fauziyyah et al., 2018; Nabilah & Aini, 2022; Rachman, 2018). Furthermore, schools should strengthen implementation consistency through clear scheduling, monitoring, and follow-up mechanisms, while also considering ways to diversify literacy materials without weakening the Qur'anic orientation of the program. At a broader level, the findings indicate that religious character formation in Islamic schools is more likely to be effective when supported by structured routines, teacher guidance, and institutional alignment rather than by doctrinal instruction alone. For this reason, future educational policy in Islamic schooling may benefit from recognizing program synergy as an intentional pedagogical strategy for strengthening student religiosity, literacy culture, and moral development in an integrated and sustainable way (Saputra et al., 2025; Rahma & Naziyah, 2025; Pohan et al., 2025).

## CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that the synergy between literacy and tahfizh programs can function as an effective pathway for shaping student religiosity when both are implemented as interconnected and structured school practices. The key lesson drawn from this research is that religiosity in Islamic education is not formed primarily through doctrinal instruction alone, but through repeated engagement with meaningful routines that connect reading, memorization, understanding, and daily religious discipline. At SMPIT Nurul Azmi Medan, literacy was found to operate not only as an academic activity but also as a religious routine, while tahfizh functioned not merely as memorization practice but as a disciplined process of spiritual internalization. When these two programs were intentionally linked through school policy, teacher mediation, and habituation, they contributed to students' attachment to the Qur'an, their participation in religious activities, and the development of observable religious behavior. The broader implication of this finding is that Islamic schools may strengthen student religiosity more effectively when they design educational practices that integrate cognitive, spiritual, and behavioral dimensions within daily school life, rather than treating them as separate instructional domains.

The strength of this study lies in its contribution to Islamic education research at both empirical and conceptual levels. Empirically, the study provides contextual evidence from an integrated Islamic school regarding how literacy and tahfizh programs are implemented, connected, and experienced by school actors in everyday practice. Conceptually, it



contributes to the literature by clarifying that synergy is not merely the coexistence of two programs, but a process of pedagogical and institutional alignment through which reading, memorization, and habituation reinforce one another in shaping religiosity. This perspective adds a process-based understanding to previous studies that often examined literacy and tahfizh separately. In addition, the study contributes by positioning student religiosity not as a fixed attribute, but as a disposition formed through patterned engagement, teacher mediation, and institutional design. Methodologically, the qualitative case study approach allowed the research to capture meanings, routines, and school-based interactions in depth. The study also opens a new line of inquiry by inviting further questions about how integrated religious programs operate in different school contexts and how their effects vary across student groups and educational environments.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted in a single school setting, which means that the findings cannot be generalized broadly across all Islamic schools or educational contexts. Second, the number of informants was limited, and although the data provided sufficient depth for a qualitative case study, the perspectives gathered may not fully represent the diversity of student experiences and institutional practices in other schools. Third, the study focused primarily on school-based implementation and did not examine in depth the influence of family background, peer culture, or wider community factors that may also shape student religiosity. Fourth, while the study identified variation in student engagement with literacy and tahfizh activities, it did not systematically compare differences across gender, grade level, or memorization achievement. These limitations suggest several directions for future research. Comparative studies across multiple Islamic schools, more in-depth exploration of student experiences, and mixed-method or longitudinal designs would help generate a more comprehensive understanding of how literacy-tahfizh synergy operates and how it may contribute to student religiosity over time and across different institutional settings.

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