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AN ANALYSIS OF THE BARRIERS TO LEARNING QUR'ANIC READING AMONG RURAL MOTHERS (A Case Study of Wih Ilang Village, Takengon)

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ABSTRACTS

Background The ability of mothers to read the Qur'an still encounters various challenges in practice. This study aims to identify the causal factors experienced by mothers in learning Qur'anic recitation. **Purpose:** The mapping process was carried out through the recognition and categorization of the different forms of obstacles faced by rural mothers in their efforts to learn Qur'anic reading. **Method:** This research employs a qualitative method, specifically a case study with a grounded research approach. The study began with selecting cases from the population in rural Takengon. Three cases were chosen based on the consideration that this phenomenon reflects the reality currently taking place in the village. These three cases were then carefully observed. **Result:** The study found that the difficulties and obstacles faced by mothers in reading the Qur'an are caused by various factors involving important elements determining the success of Qur'anic reading. At least five main causes of difficulties and obstacles were identified, first cognitive limitations related to knowledge of Qur'anic sciences, second limited religious knowledge among most mothers, resulting in a weak foundation for correctly understanding Qur'anic recitation, third time constraints due to domestic duties and household responsibilities, which prevent consistent participation in learning, fourth a limited number of Qur'an teachers in the village, causing inadequate guidance for all participants, fifth the village's difficult geographical conditions worsen accessibility to regular learning activities. **Conclusion:** Furthermore, the author categorizes the problems in learning Qur'anic reading into three aspects: cognitive and religious barriers, structural and resource barriers, and geographical and accessibility barriers. The findings indicate that these three types of obstacles are closely interrelated and require a holistic and sustainable approach to coaching and development.

A. INTRODUCTION

Barriers in learning to read the Qur'an are generally caused by several interrelated factors, stemming from both individual and social environmental aspects. On the individual side, limitations in recognizing *hijaiyah* letters, insufficient understanding of Tajweed, and low learning motivation are the main obstacles. Additionally, external factors such as the lack of competent teachers, inadequate learning facilities, and limited family support further exacerbate the situation. Research by Safi (2023) highlights the importance of approaches tailored to the needs of adult learners in Qur'anic education. Motivation and awareness of the importance of Qur'anic knowledge must be cultivated. This is essential for developing a Qur'anic generation, as evidenced by Husnaini et al. (2022), whose study found that postgraduate students managed to continue memorizing the Qur'an alongside their studies by employing their own strategies and management. Therefore, a contextual, participatory, and community-based approach is necessary to effectively and sustainably overcome these barriers.

Relevant studies on the barriers to learning Qur'anic reading have been widely conducted, both in formal and non-formal education contexts. A study by Sirin et al. (2021) revealed that learners often face challenges in Qur'anic learning due to a lack of professional educators, limited time, and inadequate facilities. Meanwhile, Tokyan (2024) reported that issues such as time constraints, ineffective teaching methods, limited human resources, and low motivation also pose challenges to Qur'anic instruction in Singapore. The Qur'anic reading skills of students in Malaysia are generally good; however, they still demonstrate significant difficulties in mastering Tajwīd knowledge, applying Tajwīd rules, and the limited availability of engaging Qur'anic learning activities on campus¹. The most critical challenges hindering Qur'anic learning among middle-aged individuals in Sri Lanka are the lack of formally trained teachers and the reluctance of participants themselves². The relevance of these studies lies in their emphasis on the importance of developing contextual and flexible learning strategies, particularly for marginalized or underserved communities. Therefore, research on these barriers is essential to design interventions that are more adaptive, holistic, and grounded in the actual needs of the learning community.

In today's era, human activities are no longer limited by time and space. People are required to engage in various tasks, often with strict deadlines. This situation demands the ability to manage time wisely to avoid loss. Allah has already emphasized the importance of time in the Qur'an, specifically in Surah *Al-ʿAsr* (verses 1–3), urging mankind to be mindful of time and to use it wisely. To realize this, individuals need knowledge and guidance, particularly through well-managed religious education supported by various stakeholders. Essentially, religious education must be a central

¹ Ahmad Fathullah Faris et al., "Quranic Reading Proficiency and Factors Affecting Mastery Quran among Public University Students," *BITARA International Journal of Civilizational Studies and Human Sciences* 6, no. 4 (2023): 127–38, <http://www.bitarajournal.com>.

² Muhammadu Ibrahim Nasrin, Ahamed Sarjoon Razick, and Iqbal Saujan, "Factors That Present Obstacles to the Learning of Quran: A Study Based on Polonnaruwa District in Sri Lanka," *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, no. July (2021), <https://doi.org/10.7176/rhss/11-13-04>.

focus for every individual, both men and women, in order to continuously remember and remain connected to Allah.

Women must be intelligent, righteous, wise, and skilled in diplomacy and political strategy, as exemplified by Maryam, Asiyah, and the Queen of Sheba (Kidway, A.R., 2020). Religious education, particularly the ability to read the Qur'an, should be a concern for all segments of society, especially for women. As central figures in the family, mothers should ideally possess a broad knowledge base, as they are expected to guide, advise, and impart beneficial teachings to their family members. However, the reality is concerning: only 35% of Muslims in Indonesia are able to read the Qur'an, while the remaining 65% from a population of 149 million Muslims are not yet literate in Qur'anic reading (Syafuruddin, 2021). In addition, the Qur'anic literacy levels among students at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh remain low (Martiningsih et al., 2022). This is particularly problematic considering that much of the Qur'anic content deals with ethics, morality, theology, spirituality, history, and the human condition in a manner that transcends specific contexts (Saeed, 2014). These conditions highlight the urgency of further study, particularly regarding mothers as the first educators (*madrasah*) for future generations.

The author reflects on the historical context of the Aceh conflict, where Aceh being a region governed by Islamic Sharia is ideally expected to have a society proficient in reading the Qur'an. Wih Ilang Village, located in the Pegasing subdistrict of Takengon, is one of the 31 villages in the area. This village lies in a mountainous region surrounded by protected forests, which brings a cool climate upon entering Wih Ilang. The majority of the village's population is Muslim, as reflected in the strong Islamic atmosphere and active religious life within the community. There are two mosques in Wih Ilang Village, each hosting various religious activities. As such, there is a strong interest in Qur'anic learning programs for women. This need is even more pronounced considering the presence of new converts (*muallaf*) in the village who urgently require religious guidance, particularly in Qur'anic literacy. Hence, structured support for Qur'anic education especially for mothers is essential, as mothers serve as the first school (*madrasah*) for their children.

Wih Ilang Village is located approximately 60 kilometers from the city center of Takengon, with a travel time of around 1.5 hours. The majority of its residents are occupied with agricultural work as their main livelihood, including farming coffee, vegetables, chili peppers, and various fruits. Their daily routines revolve around these activities, and without proper coordination—whether by the community itself, village authorities, or concerned stakeholders—opportunities to deepen religious knowledge may be lost. However, the village has made efforts not to neglect religious engagement. Several religious programs are actively implemented in Wih Ilang, including Qur'anic recitation circles (*pengajian*), *wirid* (collective dhikr), *tolak bala* (rituals for warding off misfortune), and other religious events. Despite these efforts, there remains a significant issue that needs to be addressed: many women in the village are still unable to read the Qur'an properly. This condition demands serious attention from multiple parties. Factors such as busy schedules, lack of interest, insufficient understanding, and other personal constraints often prevent women from allocating time to read the Qur'an. Consequently, there is a noticeable lack of habituation in Qur'anic reading practices among them.

These various barriers certainly require serious attention and effective solutions. Without appropriate intervention or support, the inability to read the Qur'an will become a persistent issue, potentially affecting future generations. Therefore, it is essential to conduct an in-depth study of the factors that hinder women in rural villages from learning to read the Qur'an. The purpose of this study is to examine the challenges that women in Wih Ilang Village confront when learning to read the Qur'an. By employing a qualitative case study approach, the research seeks to provide a clear depiction of the field situation and to serve as a foundation for formulating strategies to enhance Qur'anic literacy among rural communities particularly among women.

B. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method in the form of a case study using a grounded research approach. Grounded research is applied to obtain a subjective understanding of the aspects under investigation, specifically to explore the barriers to Qur'anic reading education among women in rural areas of Takengon. This approach is intended to provide a deeper understanding of how such obstacles manifest in the Qur'anic learning experiences of women in these rural communities. The grounded research process involves identifying a research-worthy problem, selecting appropriate participants, formulating research questions, collecting data through interviews, and conducting data analysis (Rukminingsih et al., 2020). This study began with the selection of cases from the rural population in Takengon. Three cases were chosen based on the consideration that the phenomenon represents an ongoing and observable reality in the village context. These three cases were then carefully observed and analyzed.

This study adopts a qualitative design, specifically a case study, to examine the barriers to Qur'anic reading education among women in rural areas. A case study approach was chosen in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the nature and characteristics of the case, including its history, events, and processes. The case study is further supported by a grounded theory approach, which is applied to explore the underlying factors that hinder Qur'anic learning for women in rural Takengon. The research site was selected purposively, as Wih Ilang Village is one of the remote areas with limited access to religious education, making it a relevant context for analyzing the challenges in Qur'anic reading education for women. This selection was based on the distinctive characteristics of the location, which align with the focus of the study (Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M., 2014).

The sources of information in this study are based on documents related to religious programs and activities in rural areas, interviews with local women and community leaders—namely TtI, MyT, EdN, EnG, IsN, and AsH—as well as field observations. The data collected were then categorized into three main thematic groups: (1) Cognitive and Religious Barriers, (2) Structural and Resource-Based Barriers, and (3) Geographical and Accessibility Barriers. Participant selection for interviews was conducted using purposive sampling (Patton, 2002), meaning that data sources were chosen based on considerations such as ease of communication, commitment,

availability of time, and willingness to engage in the research process. In this study, three participants were selected to take part. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with these participants to clarify issues related to cognitive aspects of Qur'anic knowledge, general religious understanding, time constraints, the availability of Qur'an teachers, and the geographical conditions of the village.

Data collection in this study was conducted through observation and interviews, focusing on mapping the potential and scope of available data related to the barriers in Qur'anic reading education for women. The observation method concentrated on the conditions of Qur'anic learning activities as well as the geographical challenges of the hard-to-reach location. Simultaneously, interviews were conducted with women learners, Qur'an instructors, and community leaders to obtain more detailed and contextually accurate information regarding the realities of Qur'anic reading education for women in rural areas. The data collection process began with observations of Qur'anic learning activities and the village's geographical conditions, followed by semi-structured interviews with key informants. These two techniques were selected because they complement each other, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles faced by rural women in learning to read the Qur'an. This sequence of stages also ensures that the data obtained is representative, in-depth, and aligned with the research focus.

Data analysis in this study was conducted in two stages. The first stage employed a grounded theory approach. Interview transcripts were fully transcribed according to the informants' statements. These transcripts were then coded with a focus on issues related to cognitive aspects of Qur'anic knowledge, levels of religious understanding, time constraints, availability of Qur'an instructors, and the geographical conditions of the village where the study was conducted. In other words, the researcher carried out processes of identification, labeling, grouping, and elaboration of various phenomena emerging from the interview data and observations. In the subsequent stage, the researcher linked the various formed categories into a certain structure or pattern by connecting relevant codes and identifying a narrative flow that unites these categories into a coding model.

In the open coding stage, each interview excerpt was assigned a label representing its core meaning, for example, *time constraints* for statements indicating limitations of time. Subsequently, through axial coding, similar codes were grouped into broader categories, such as *structural barriers* or *resource barriers*. In the selective coding stage, these categories were integrated into three main themes, namely cognitive and religious barriers, structural and resource barriers, and geographical and accessibility barriers. This process demonstrates how raw data were systematically organized into a coherent thematic pattern that reflects the key factors hindering Qur'anic reading learning among rural mothers.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Cognitive and Religious Barriers

Cognitive and religious aspects are essential components in achieving the goal of effective Qur'anic reading instruction. Religious literacy plays a crucial role; if it is lacking, the objectives of Islamic education particularly in relation to Qur'anic reading skills cannot be fulfilled. In the case of Qur'anic learning among women in rural areas, obstacles are also caused by limited knowledge of Qur'anic sciences and a weak understanding of religious teachings. The following table illustrates these issues.

Table 1. Interview Results Related to Qur'anic Reading Learning

Inf	Contextual Explanation	Interview Findings	Initial Codes
Ttl	A 40-year-old housewife with three children, who also works as a farmer. She is a high school graduate and rarely studies the Qur'an	I still struggle with reading and pronouncing the correct makhraj (articulation points); sometimes my time for studying the Qur'an is very limited, and the teacher is occasionally unavailable	Errors in reading and pronunciation of letter makhraj, time constraints, and lack of availability of Qur'an teachers
MyT	A 40-year-old housewife with three children, who also works as a farmer. She is a junior high school graduate and rarely studies the Qur'an	I still make mistakes in reading, mispronounce letters, and err in makhraj (articulation). I am very busy during the coffee harvest season, so I rarely have time to participate in Qur'an learning programs. Moreover, there is only one available Qur'an teacher	Errors in reading, pronunciation, and letter articulation (makhraj); time constraints; and lack of available Qur'an teachers
EdN	A 38-year-old housewife with three children, who also works as a	I still make mistakes in reading, especially with the length and	Errors in reading and in lengthening and shortening of letters (Madd),

	farmer. She is a vocational high school (SMK) graduate and rarely studies the Qur'an	shortness of letters; regarding time, I have to divide it between managing the household and working in the fields. The teacher's schedule is also limited	time constraints, and lack of available Qur'an teachers
EnG	A 43-year-old housewife with two children, who also works as a farmer. She is a junior high school graduate and a recent convert to Islam (muallaf). She rarely studies the Qur'an	I still make mistakes in reading and in pronouncing the makhraj (articulation points). Sometimes, it is difficult to balance my time between studying the Qur'an and working in the fields. Additionally, the teacher has to travel through difficult routes during the rainy season, which makes the Qur'an learning sessions less effective	Errors in reading and pronunciation of makhraj, time constraints, and lack of available Qur'an teachers
IsN	A 39-year-old housewife with three children, who also works as a farmer. She is a high school graduate and a recent convert to Islam (muallaf). She rarely studies the Qur'an	I still make mistakes in reading, especially regarding the length and shortness of letters. During the coffee harvest season, my time in the fields sometimes overlaps with Qur'an study sessions. I cannot ask the teacher to reschedule because the teacher has	Errors in reading and in lengthening and shortening of letters (<i>Madd</i>), time constraints, and lack of available Qur'an teachers

		duties in other locations	
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Source: Interview with Women Regarding Qur'anic Reading Learning in Wih Ilang Village, Takengon (Friday, November 8, 2024, at 2:30 PM WIB)

Meanwhile, informant AsH revealed that Wih Ilang is a village predominantly inhabited by recent converts to Islam (muallaf). The women in Wih Ilang face time constraints in attending Qur'anic learning sessions held once a week. This is mainly due to their busy roles as housewives, and sometimes the schedule coincides with the coffee harvest season. There is a local tradition in the village where women tend to do more outdoor work, which further reduces the time available for Qur'anic study. Another challenge is the lack of awareness among the women regarding religious understanding, leading to a lack of motivation to learn the Qur'an. Furthermore, the availability of qualified Qur'an teachers is still inadequate, compounded by difficult access to the learning locations.

Table 1 and the interview results from informant AsH indicate that there are women who are recent converts (muallaf) and rarely study the Qur'an, aged between 38 and 43 years, with educational backgrounds ranging from junior high school to senior high school. It can be concluded that there are three main aspects of obstacles in learning to read the Qur'an: (1) cognitive and religious barriers; (2) structural and resource barriers; and (3) geographical and accessibility barriers.

2. Structural and Resource Barriers; Geographical and Accessibility Barriers

Table 2. Observation Results Related to Barriers in Qur'anic Reading Learning

Time and Location	Observation Notes	Initial Codes	Categories
10:00 AM WIB, Wih Ilang Village (Resident's House)	Only 12 out of 23 participants attended the session. Some participants were reluctant to recite the Qur'an aloud due to feelings of embarrassment. Those who attended mostly listened from a distance and did not approach the teacher closely. The Qur'anic reading abilities of the women varied: some were still illiterate in Arabic script, many could not read accurately, some pronounced makhraj incorrectly, and	low participation, lack of motivation and enthusiasm, cognitive weakness	structural and human resource barriers, cognitive and religious barriers

	<p>others had limited understanding of tajwid rules. The women with the initials TtI, MyT, EdN, EnG, and IsN respectively were observed using Iqra books level 5, level 3, level 4, while the remaining participants read directly from the Mushaf (Qur'an).</p>		
<p>o8:00 AM WIB, Wih Ilang Village (Route to the Activity Location)</p>	<p>Vehicles that can traverse the route to Wih Ilang Village must be specialized, such as four-wheel-drive cars or motorcycles equipped with “cangkul” tires (a type of off-road tire). The research team traveled to the village using three types of transportation depending on the terrain: a car on routes accessible to vehicles, a motorcycle on paths unsuitable for cars, and on foot for areas inaccessible even by motorcycle.</p> <p>Transportation in this village does not fully rely on conventional motor vehicles. Many residents still use traditional means of transport or walk to reach important locations within the village. This is due to the inadequate condition of the roads, most of which remain uneven rocky terrain that is difficult to navigate, especially during the rainy season. The rocky and steep roads pose</p>	<p>Difficult access to the location</p>	<p>Geographical and Accessibility Barriers</p>

	significant challenges to daily activities, including participation in religious and educational events such as Qur'anic reading lessons. The limited road infrastructure also affects the mobility of teachers and instructors, as well as the distribution of learning materials needed by the villagers.		
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Source: Results of Observation

Table 2 presents the observation results during the Qur'anic reading learning activities for women in Wih Ilang Village, Takengon. It can be concluded that there are three main aspects of barriers to Qur'anic reading learning: (1) cognitive and religious barriers; (2) structural and resource barriers; and (3) geographical and accessibility barriers.



Figure 1. Women participants of the religious study group



Figure 2. Access road conditions to Wih Ilang Village

Discussion

The study reveals that the barriers to Qur'anic reading learning for women in rural areas can be categorized into three main aspects: cognitive and religious barriers; structural and resource barriers; and geographical and accessibility barriers. First, cognitive and religious barriers are characterized by the women's limited knowledge of Qur'anic sciences, low motivation and enthusiasm, and limited available time. Second, structural barriers are reflected in the shortage of Qur'an instructors dedicated to teaching women in rural settings. Third, the road conditions or routes leading to the village are very difficult to access. These three aspects collectively depict the challenges faced by rural women in learning to read the Qur'an.

These barriers reflect a failure within the Islamic education system, particularly concerning rural women's ability to read the Qur'an. The lack of attention to women's religious literacy results in weakened mental resilience among the next generation, as mothers serve as the primary educators (*madrasah*) for their children. Therefore, it is crucial for the government, especially the Aceh provincial government, to revive scholarly traditions, including Qur'anic reading skills for women in rural areas. Given Aceh's special autonomy policy in education (Qanun Aceh, 2014), an evaluation should be conducted regarding religious education outcomes, specifically women's Qur'anic reading abilities in rural communities. Historically, Acehnese women fought colonialism empowered by the strength granted by Allah through their close relationship with God. This history illustrates the importance of building awareness through knowledge to achieve victory.

Studies related to barriers in Qur'anic reading learning for women reveal three main issues: cognitive and religious barriers; structural and resource barriers; and geographical and accessibility barriers. According to Inten and Agustina (2022), one major obstacle in Qur'anic reading learning for rural women is the lack of awareness regarding religious literacy, which results in weak cognitive understanding of the material. Another hindrance is the shortage of Qur'an instructors for women in rural areas (Sirin et al., 2021). Furthermore, difficult access to rural locations directly impacts the implementation of education. This situation creates a disharmony between educational policy and practice, ultimately widening the gap between the goal of enlightening society and the state's legal mandates. The state has, in fact, mandated through the 1945 Constitution that every citizen has the right to education. Moreover, religious education, particularly Qur'anic reading skills, should be a top priority for the government.

The implementation of various Islamic education programs in the community, such as Qur'anic reading instruction for rural women, is a government policy that has been, is being, and will continue to be carried out. Throughout its implementation, the program faces various challenges that require attention from multiple stakeholders. The main obstacle is geographical, with locations that are difficult to access. Additionally, the inability of rural women to read the Qur'an properly, weak motivation, insufficient availability of instructors, and limited time are challenges faced by the government in rural and underdeveloped villages (Hidayah et al., 2023). The interpretation of these issues varies among different parties and perspectives. Given these complexities, a thorough reevaluation of Qur'anic reading education for rural women is necessary.

Previous studies on religious literacy, particularly Qur'anic reading learning for rural women, have primarily focused on strategies and models. Several studies,

including those by Hidayati & Gufron (2024), Jailani et al. (2025), and Salam, Zuhri, & Sumaryati (2025), have researched strategies in Qur'anic education. M. Hasan (2021) examined the effect of the takrir method in improving Qur'anic reading skills in a majelis taklim in Balikpapan using a quantitative approach. Rahmah et al. (2021) discussed the Qur'anic learning model implemented in the Quran Fun Camp (QFC) program in Probolinggo city. Existing research has mainly addressed strategies and models; however, there is a lack of specific studies focusing on the barriers to Qur'anic reading learning for rural women.

Writings on the barriers to Qur'anic reading learning for rural women require a comprehensive action plan. Generally, there is a need to reassess the concept of Qur'anic learning for adults, particularly for rural women. This forms the basis for the importance of adult education and helps prevent the failure of religious literacy programs in the community. A thorough study and evaluation of Qur'anic learning can enable the reestablishment of supportive policies, human resources capable of meeting religious literacy demands, and adequate infrastructure. These three aspects demand serious attention from government authorities when addressing the barriers to Qur'anic reading learning for rural women.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the barriers to Qur'anic reading learning for rural women are caused by several factors. First, cognitive and religious barriers, including reading errors, incorrect madd (prolongation), mispronunciation of makhraj (articulation points), and low motivation among the women. Second, structural and resource barriers, where the limited time available to women—due to their responsibilities as housewives and helping their husbands earn a living—impacts their religious knowledge development. This is further compounded by the inadequate availability of Qur'an instructors. Third, geographical and accessibility barriers, which exacerbate the difficulties in Qur'anic reading learning due to the village's remote location and challenging geographical conditions.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the barriers within Islamic religious education, particularly in Qur'anic reading learning. Factors such as weak Qur'anic cognition, awareness and motivation, time constraints, availability of instructors, and geographical conditions shed light on the sustainability of Islamic education. Furthermore, this research offers practical contributions by emphasizing the importance of reexamining the obstacles to Qur'anic reading learning for rural women. Such educational activities are crucial for fostering religious literacy awareness among women, who serve as the primary educators within their households.

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