

## The Role of the Ummi Method in Developing Al-Qur'an Reading Proficiency: An Evaluation of Tilawah and Tahfizh Achievements in Integrated Islamic Schools

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**Abstract.** This descriptive qualitative study analyzes the role and effectiveness of the Ummi Method in developing Al-Qur'an reading proficiency (*Tilawah* and *Tahfizh*) among students at SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun Lembang, an Integrated Islamic School. The study evaluates student achievement against the school's systematic curriculum targets over one semester. Data were collected through sustained observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and systematic documentation analysis of Munaqasyah and Jilid progression records. Findings indicate that while the majority of students met or exceeded targets, significant variability in proficiency exists, primarily linked to students' initial motivation and rigorous group conditioning. The method's success is critically dependent on teachers' spiritual competence (*Ruhiyah*), pedagogical methodology, and conducive learning management. The study recommends continuous spiritual and professional development for teachers and intensive motivational programs to ensure optimal, holistic student outcomes.

**Keywords:** Ummi Method, Tilawah Proficiency, Teacher Ruhiyah.

### 1 Introduction

The contemporary landscape of Islamic education, particularly within Integrated Islamic Schools (SMPIT), presents a complex challenge: cultivating a generation proficient in Al-Qur'an recitation and memorization while concurrently instilling strong moral character and academic excellence. The mission of forming a *Generasi Qurani* (Qur'anic Generation) necessitates the implementation of effective, engaging, and spiritually anchored pedagogical strategies. Among the various techniques employed globally, the Ummi Method has gained considerable traction in Indonesia's integrated school network due to its adherence to the *3M* principles: Mudah (Easy), Menyenangkan (Enjoyable), and Menyentuh Hati (Touching the Heart) [1], [2]. This systematic, jilid-based approach aims not only for technical fluency (*Tartil*) but also for a deep, spiritual connection (*Ruhiyah*) with the Holy Book.

Despite its structural rigor, the effectiveness of the Ummi Method is subject to significant contextual factors, leading to heterogeneous learning outcomes across different student populations. At SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun Lembang, the method is integral to the specialized curriculum, featuring systematic evaluation stages from basic reading

(*Tilawah*) to complex memorization (*Tahfizh*). However, observable variability in reading proficiency persists. Students transitioning from primary Islamic schools (*SDIT*) already familiar with the Ummi Method often advance rapidly, demonstrating the cumulative advantage of consistent early exposure. Conversely, students from conventional backgrounds often struggle to meet the accelerated pace, highlighting a crucial gap between method design and universal student achievement [3], [4]. This discrepancy calls for a comprehensive academic evaluation to move beyond anecdotal success and empirically pinpoint the critical success factors and persistent inhibitors of the method in a secondary school context.

The challenge is exacerbated by the broader demands of the *Merdeka* Curriculum in Indonesian education, which stresses competencies, customization, and character development [5], [6]. Al-Qur'an learning must thus evolve from a rote mechanical skill to an adaptive, personalized, and character-building process. This places immense pressure on instructional design and, fundamentally, on the competency and spiritual preparedness of the teacher [7]. Previous studies have affirmed that the success of Al-Qur'an pedagogy is deeply intertwined with the creation of a conducive, spiritually motivating learning environment, emphasizing the relational and emotional elements over merely technical instruction [8].

However, a significant theoretical and empirical gap exists in the extant literature. Most academic studies on the Ummi Method focus predominantly on describing its successful implementation at the primary level or confirming its general effectiveness in technical skill acquisition. There is a conspicuous lack of in-depth qualitative evaluation of the method's impact on *Tilawah* and *Tahfizh* achievement specifically at the junior high level (*SMPIT*), where student motivation, social complexity, and pre-existing skill divergence are highest [9], [10]. Studies have yet to fully address how the systematic documentation of *Jilid* progression and *Munaqasyah* results can be utilized as a strategic management tool to identify the *pedagogical thresholds* that cause student stratification.

This research, therefore, offers two key contributions. First, it provides a rigorous, empirical measurement of the Ummi Method's role at the *SMPIT* level, moving beyond general observation to analyze systematic achievement data [11]. Second, and more importantly, it introduces a holistic analytical framework that integrates pedagogical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. By specifically examining the influence of student motivation, group conditioning, and teacher's spiritual competence (*Ruhiyah*)—an element often overlooked in technical educational research—this study identifies the core management and human factors that determine sustainable proficiency [12], [13].

The underlying assumption is that the effectiveness of the Ummi Method is not monolithic; it requires a structured strategic management approach encompassing continuous professional development for teachers and personalized motivational support for students to bridge the proficiency gap. This investigation seeks to provide actionable insights for school leadership, enabling them to optimize the Ummi ecosystem into an adaptive model for fostering technically proficient and spiritually resilient *Generasi Qurani* [14], [15]. The subsequent sections will detail the methodology, present the qualitative findings integrated with the quantitative achievement data, and discuss the implications for developing a holistic and sustainable Al-Qur'an curriculum.

## 2 Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design focused on a single institution: SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun Lembang. This design was selected to facilitate an in-depth, contextual understanding of the processes and factors influencing Al-Qur'an reading proficiency using the Umami Method [16]. The qualitative approach allows for rich description and interpretation of the complex interactions between students' psychological states, teachers' spiritual roles, and formal achievement data, which a purely quantitative study would fail to capture.

The target population comprised all students (Grades 7–9) enrolled in the Umami program during the 2024/2025 academic year, the Al-Qur'an teachers, and the program coordinator. A purposive sampling technique was used to select key informants, including teachers with diverse experience levels and students representing low, medium, and high proficiency achievement tiers, ensuring data comprehensiveness and representativeness.

Data collection employed triangulation of three methods: (1) Participative Observation of classroom and small-group (*halaqah*) Umami learning sessions to document teaching methodology and student-teacher interaction; (2) In-depth, Semi-structured Interviews with key informants to explore perceptions, challenges, and strategies regarding *Ruhiyah* and motivation; and (3) Documentation Analysis of official achievement records, including Munaqasyah (final graduation exam) results, monthly *Jilid* progression reports, and teacher supervision notes.

Data analysis followed the inductive process articulated by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [17], comprising sequential stages of data reduction, data display (using matrices and narrative summaries), and conclusion drawing/verification. Trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation and member-checking with the Al-Qur'an coordinator to validate the interpretation of technical achievement data and contextual phenomena.

## 3 Result

### 3.1 Tilawah and Tahfizh Achievement: Systematic Success with Stratified Outcomes

Achievement data, specifically the records from the formal semester Munaqasyah (reading graduation exam) and the continuous monthly *Jilid* progression, confirm that the Umami Method successfully functions as an organized system for skill development. Across Grades 7-9, the average proficiency scores in *Tilawah* (recitation fluency) and *Tajwid* (rule adherence) demonstrate that the majority of students (approximately 85%) met or exceeded the school's target standards. This success validates the foundational principle of the Umami Method—its systematic, graduated approach allows for mastery of phonetics and rules before advancing to the next *jilid*.

However, the analysis of stratified achievement data reveals a critical insight: the non-uniformity of mastery. Students who entered SMPIT from primary schools where the Umami Method was already implemented showed an accelerated rate of *Jilid* progression and significantly higher Munaqasyah scores (averaging above 9.5 out of 10).

Conversely, students who were new to the method or who had an uneven foundation exhibited slower progress and lower compliance with group conditioning efforts, forming a "proficiency gap".

*"The data confirms the method's technical power, but the issue lies at the starting line. Those with low prior exposure or weak commitment struggle in the first two jilids, and this initial gap requires immense extra work from the teacher to close."* (Coordinator Interview, 2025).

This stratification is a direct challenge to the notion of the Umami Method as a universally "easy" and "enjoyable" method. While the method's structure (short, focused lessons, visual aids) inherently supports constructivism and mastery learning [18], the effectiveness of the technical method is contingent upon the psychological and social-cognitive state of the learner [19]. Without the necessary internal motivation and a conducive social learning environment, the systematic progression is hindered. The findings thus shift the success paradigm from the method's content to the management of the learning ecosystem.

### **3.2. Critical Success Factors: The Triad of Motivation, Group Conditioning, and Teacher Ruhiyah**

The qualitative data overwhelmingly points to three non-pedagogical factors as the most critical determinants of proficiency stratification: student motivation, class group conditioning, and the spiritual competence of the teacher (*Ruhiyah*).

Motivation, particularly in the challenging phase of transitioning to advanced *Tilawah* and early *Tahfizh* (memorization), emerged as a primary variable. Students with low intrinsic motivation often exhibited high attendance but low engagement, leading to stagnation in *Jilid* progression, despite the teacher's efforts. The Umami Method relies on continuous small-group practice and self-correction, requiring a high degree of student tenacity [8].

The interview data suggested that the *Menyentuh Hati* (Touching the Heart) principle of the Umami Method is designed to foster this intrinsic motivation. However, teachers reported that this spiritual bonding must be actively managed and cannot be assumed, especially at the junior high level where students face greater external and social distractions.

*"We find that many students are proficient in technical reading, but their Tahfizh progress is stalled. This is rarely a capacity issue; it's a commitment issue. We need a systematic program for motivation, not just a one-time spiritual talk."* (Teacher A Interview, 2025).

This aligns with literature on educational management, which stresses that sustainable quality improvement must integrate factors beyond technical process, extending into the organizational culture and the emotional readiness of the participants [20]. The Umami Method is heavily reliant on small, homogeneous learning groups (*halaqah*). The ability of the teacher to maintain group discipline and positive peer influence (*group conditioning*) was directly correlated with overall group achievement. Observation data showed that in groups where conditioning was weak, highly proficient students were often distracted or slowed down by low-performing peers, leading to frustration. Conversely, strong conditioning created a positive ZPD where peer-tutoring and social modeling accelerated the progress of all members [19].

The management failure here is often subtle: a lack of firm yet empathetic leadership from the teacher that allows disruptive behavior or motivational imbalance to persist. This highlights the crucial role of management principles in pedagogy; the *organizing* and *actuating* functions are indispensable for effective group learning. The need for clear management standards in addressing non-academic issues like motivation and student conduct is paramount, reinforcing the importance of proactive management in achieving educational goals [21].

The most compelling qualitative finding concerns the impact of the teacher's spiritual competence (*Ruhiyah*)—the teacher's internal commitment, sincerity, and consistency in modeling Islamic character—on student outcomes. *Ruhiyah* transcends mere pedagogical skill; it is the spiritual capital that allows the teacher to truly execute the *Menyentuh Hati* principle [7].

Teachers possessing high *Ruhiyah* were observed implementing the method with greater empathy, patience, and motivational intensity, resulting in higher student engagement and reduced behavioral issues, even among the low-proficiency groups.

*"When I teach with a strong heart [Ruhiyah], I don't get frustrated when students make the same mistake. They feel that sincerity, and that builds their trust and their motivation to improve. It's the foundation of the 'Touching the Heart' principle."* (Teacher B Interview, 2025).

This finding introduces a critical dimension into Al-Qur'an pedagogy, suggesting that spiritual development is a core component of professional competence for Ummi teachers [12]. The management challenge thus extends beyond *pedagogical* training (methodology) to spiritual development programs to maintain teacher consistency and sincerity.

### 3.3. Management Strategies and Predictive Modeling for Optimization

The systematic monitoring of student progress through the Ummi Munaqasyah and *Jilid* reports serves as a dynamic data dashboard for the program coordinator. This data facilitates a predictive model: stagnation in *Jilid* progression after the third month in Grade 7 is a strong predictor of Munaqasyah failure, allowing for early intervention.

Intervention Strategy based on Findings:

1. Personalized Motivational Program: Utilizing the digital management tools (Ulfah & Anwar, 2024) and collaborative management principles (Anwar & Sulaeman, 2025) to track students who show low motivational scores (e.g., frequent lack of preparation, minimal *tahfizh* review) and assigning them a mentor teacher with strong *Ruhiyah* for intensive weekly sessions.
2. Adaptive Grouping: Implementing flexible grouping models that allow for a mid-semester adjustment of *halaqah* membership based on the convergence rate (speed of progress) rather than just the initial *Jilid* placement. This addresses the problem of stalled students dragging down the pace of higher-achieving peers (Ruslan, 2024).
3. Teacher Development (*Ruhiyah* and Methodology): Establishing a continuous, formal training cycle that includes both technical mastery of Tajwid and dedicated spiritual retreats or *halaqah* for teachers to maintain their *Ruhiyah* [7]. This proactive investment in human resource development is a strategic necessity [22].

This integration of qualitative insights (*Ruhiyah*, motivation) with quantitative data (Jilid progress) allows SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun to move from a reactive model (addressing failure after it occurs) to a proactive, predictive model that ensures the Ummi Method's holistic effectiveness, aligning with modern strategic management in education [7].

## 4 Discussion

The findings concerning the Ummi Method's implementation at SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun provide a critical expansion of the discourse on Islamic education pedagogy, repositioning the debate from the technical merits of the method to the integrity of the surrounding educational ecosystem. The systematic success in technical *Tilawah* is a testament to the Ummi Method's design, but the persistence of a proficiency gap directly attributable to *motivation* and *Ruhiyah* underscores the necessity of a holistic management model [4], [10].

The core of this discussion lies in establishing that pedagogical methods are fundamentally managed processes. The Ummi Method, despite its rigorous technical foundation, cannot operate in a vacuum. Its dependency on factors like teacher *Ruhiyah* and student psychological conditioning moves its successful implementation squarely into the realm of strategic educational management. The school's challenge is not a *pedagogical* one, but a *managerial* one: how to standardize and sustain the human factors that define the "*Menyentuh Hati*" principle [20]. This requires the school leadership to view the Ummi program not merely as a subject, but as a Total Quality Management (TQM) cycle where every input—from curriculum structure to teacher spiritual well-being—is treated as a critical variable impacting output (Deming, 1986).

Furthermore, the emphasis on teacher *Ruhiyah* acts as a powerful corrective to overly rationalized models of professional competency. While conventional competency frameworks focus on pedagogical and professional skills, the success of the Ummi Method demonstrates that in character-centric Islamic education, spiritual capital is productive capital [7]. A teacher with strong *Ruhiyah* is inherently a better motivator, a more patient mentor, and a more consistent role model, thus bridging the psychological gap that technical methods alone cannot cross. This necessitates a strategic shift in teacher development, moving beyond technical training to integrating regular spiritual development and character assessment as core components of professional excellence.

The observed stratification in student achievement reinforces the principles of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory. The Ummi *halaqah* (small group) is the definitive Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). When the group conditioning is robust, the high-performing students effectively scaffold the learning of their peers, accelerating the entire group's progress. However, when motivational imbalance is introduced (e.g., unmotivated students in the group), the ZPD collapses, leading to frustration and stagnation. The management implication here is clear: group formation and maintenance must be dynamic, data-driven, and subject to continuous professional oversight to ensure the ZPD remains functional and conducive to learning for every student [23].

The findings also provide actionable insights for the wider Integrated Islamic School (SIT) network. The implementation of strategic tools, such as the systematic analysis of Munaqasyah and Jilid data, allows schools to generate internal benchmarks

and create a predictive management model. By proactively identifying students at risk of stagnation based on early *Jilid* progress and intervening with *Ruhiyah*-focused mentorship, schools can significantly reduce the ultimate failure rate and optimize resource allocation. This approach aligns with modern, data-informed education management, positioning the SIT network as a leader in adaptive, holistic curriculum delivery [24].

In conclusion, the Ummi Method is pedagogically robust, but its long-term effectiveness in generating a universally proficient and spiritually anchored student body is an exercise in strategic human resource management. The future success of this method hinges on the conscious elevation of teacher *Ruhiyah* from an implied value to a measured, developed, and strategically utilized resource, ensuring that the *Menyentuh Hati* principle is consistently delivered.

## 5 Conclusion

This research concludes that the Ummi Method is a successful, systematically sound pedagogical approach for developing Al-Qur'an reading proficiency (Tilawah and Tahfizh) at SMPIT Ibnu Khaldun. The method's technical rigor enables the majority of students to meet curriculum targets, validating its use in Integrated Islamic Schools. However, the study confirms that the method's long-term effectiveness is critically dependent on non-pedagogical human factors.

The persistence of a proficiency gap is primarily linked to variances in student motivation and the quality of group conditioning. Most profoundly, the success of the *Menyentuh Hati* principle is directly determined by the teacher's spiritual competence (*Ruhiyah*). This necessitates a major shift in institutional strategy.

The study recommends that school leadership implement a holistic management model focused on: (1) Continuous spiritual and professional development for teachers to strengthen their *Ruhiyah*; (2) Intensive motivational programs at the start of the semester to address student commitment; and (3) Dynamic, data-informed group management based on systematic *Jilid* progression and *Munaqasyah* results. This strategic approach will ensure the Ummi Method evolves into an adaptive model for producing a generation that is both technically proficient and spiritually resilient.

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