

# Proclaiming the Qur'an and its Translation in Mosques: Phenomenological and Ethnomethodological Approaches

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## Abstract:

The recitation of the Qur'an has become a ubiquitous practice in mosques and Islamic boarding schools, fostering a profound acculturation between Arab culture and local culture. This phenomenon is particularly evident in institutions such as the Ponpes Ulul Albab Mosque, where the ritualistic recitation of the Qur'an serves as a cornerstone of religious and cultural identity. This research employs a phenomenological and ethnomethodological approach to evaluate the effectiveness and societal responses to this activity. By examining the lived experiences and social interactions surrounding Qur'anic recitation, this study aims to elucidate the complex dynamics involved in the cultural transmission of Islamic practices. The findings of this research indicate a positive acceptance from the community, with significant affective, cognitive, and conative impacts. The affective dimension reveals a profound emotional resonance among participants, as the recitation of the Qur'an evokes feelings of spiritual connection and communal solidarity. The cognitive dimension highlights the intellectual engagement and understanding that arises from the meticulous study and recitation of the sacred text. Furthermore, the conative dimension underscores the motivational and behavioral changes observed among participants, as they strive to perfect their recitation skills and integrate these practices into their daily lives. This study contributes significantly to the understanding of modern religious practices and cultural interactions in the context of Qur'anic recitation in mosques.

**Keywords:** Ethnomethodology; Islamic culture; Mosque; Qur'anic recitation; textual translation.

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of repeated verses in the Qur'an is the main basis for Muslims to reflect on and understand the messages conveyed (Roifa et al., 2017; Yunus & Jamil, 2020). For example, Surah Al-Qomar, especially the 17th verse, emphasizes the ease of the Al-Qur'an as a warning and invites people to take lessons (QS. Al-Qamar 54:17). This verse is not only repeated in the same surah but also in verses 32 and 40 with similar redactions. In fact, the command to take lessons is also mentioned in verses 15 and 51, although with different editing. Quraish Shihab (2003) explains that Allah made the Qur'an easier as a lesson in various ways, such as revealing verses gradually, repeating important verses, giving examples in various situations, and making parables that are useful for people who think (Hasanudin & Zulaiha, 2022).

In the current era, mosques have become centers of religious activities and worship rituals, including reading and studying the Qur'an (Nurhady, 2019). The recitation of verses from the holy Qur'an, either with or without translation, through mosque speakers has become a common practice in many mosques in Indonesia, especially in Islamic boarding schools (Rahman, 2016). This phenomenon inspired us to research the effectiveness and impact of singing the Al-Qur'an and its translation on mosque congregations.

This phenomenon is the result of acculturation between Arab culture brought by the Al-Qur'an and local culture, resulting in a new tradition of singing the Al-Qur'an through loudspeakers in mosques. Therefore, in this research, we will use a social and cultural theory approach to explore more deeply the impact and effectiveness of this activity (Putra et al., 2021).

In the context of comparison with previous research, such as that conducted by Jahrani, Hartati, and Khalfiah (2023) regarding the implementation of Al-Qur'an *tahsin* activities at the Al-Firdaus Mosque, and Busaeri (2018) regarding the tradition of reading the Al-Qur'an in the Mosque Agung Bandung, it should be emphasized that the focus of this research is different. We put more emphasis on the activities of singing the Al-Qur'an and its translation in mosques, whereas previous research focused more on the activities of *tahsin* and reading the Al-Qur'an. The similarity between the two lies in the effort to assess the level of understanding of respondents regarding two different Al-Qur'an study activities.

By digging deeper into the effectiveness and impact of singing the Qur'an in mosques (A. K. Rasmussen, 2017; Shokouhi & Yusof, 2013), it is hoped that this research can provide a valuable contribution to the understanding of modern religious practices and the interaction between Arab culture and local culture. This research brings new contributions to the understanding of modern religious practices with a focus on the activity of singing the Qur'an in mosques. The novelty of this research lies in exploring the impact and effectiveness of this activity in the context of Arab culture and local culture, as well as how this phenomenon reflects the results of acculturation in the modern era. This research also differentiates itself from previous research, which places more emphasis on the activities of reading and reciting the Al-Qur'an by focusing on the activities of reciting the Al-Qur'an and its translation. Thus, this research can provide new insights into the dynamics of religious activities in contemporary society.

## METHOD

The research in this article is descriptive and qualitative, carried out using field study techniques or *field research* (Lune & Berg, 2017). This method allows researchers to collect data directly in the field, which will later be analyzed and presented in research discussions (Mustari & Rahman, 2012). The main aim of this research is to find facts empirically, namely facts that are in accordance with the data and come directly from the research subject, not from the researcher's perspective (Ramadayanto et al., 2021).

The approach used in this research is a phenomenological and ethnomethodological approach (Garfinkel, 2017; Hasbiansyah, 2008). A phenomenological approach is used to understand individual experiences and perceptions of the activity of singing the Qur'an in the mosque. Meanwhile, an ethnomethodological approach is used to analyze the procedures and patterns of social interaction that occur in the context of reciting the Qur'an in mosques (Baidan, 2011).

This research was conducted at the Ulul Albab Sangkanhurip Islamic Boarding School, Katapang District, Bandung Regency. The research location is in the Bumi Agnes Nanjung housing complex, which has more than 200 families as a resident population. Even though the population is quite large, participants in mosque activities from this community do not reach 10% of the total population. This is the focus of research to understand the factors that influence community participation in singing the Qur'an in mosques. By using a phenomenological and ethnomethodological approach, it is hoped that this research can provide an in-depth understanding of experiences and social interactions in the context of reciting the Qur'an in mosques, especially at the Ulul Albab Sangkanhurip Islamic Boarding School.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Impact of Playing the Qur'an and Its Translation in Mosque

This research began its activities from the beginning of the establishment of the Ulul Albab Islamic Boarding School in Sangkanhurip Village, Bandung Regency. History records that the Ulul Albab Islamic Boarding School was officially founded on February 7 2005 under the leadership of Ustad Mulyana. This Islamic boarding school is the 3rd branch of Buya K.H. Drs. Asep Sudrajat M.M, with the main branch located on Jl. Wiradisastra, Bandung

City. Interestingly, the Ulul Albab Islamic Boarding School has a special focus on educating and caring for students who come from the poor, orphans and orphans.

Since the inception of this Islamic boarding school until now, the activity of singing the Al-Qur'an and its translation has been carried out continuously. By looking at the history of the establishment of the Islamic Boarding School in 2005, this activity has been going on for more than 18 years. As a resident who lives close to the Islamic boarding school, the author feels interested in digging deeper into this phenomenon. This social phenomenon has experienced acculturation and becomes part of a new culture, which, of course, has an impact on the surrounding community, both positive and negative. The authors assume that this impact may vary depending on individual responses.

The basis for this research comes from and is inspired by the holy verses of the Qur'an, namely QS. Ad-Dukhan 44:58, which reads:

فَأَمَّا يُسْرُنُهُ لِبِلسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

"Indeed, We have made the Qur'an easy in your language so that they can learn it."

The verse above highlights the importance of the Qur'an as a learning material and guidance for all Muslims. God simplified the Qur'an in Arabic, becoming the language of the Prophet Muhammad as a messenger so that it can be used as a lesson that is easily accepted and understood by the Arab community, the first people of the Prophet Muhammad. The importance of this language to ensure the understanding and practice of the Divine message, including about the Day of Resurrection.

Another basis that emphasizes the importance of understanding the Qur'an is the hadith of the Prophet narrated by Imam Bukhari (Al-Bukhari, 2005). This hadith reflects the stupidity of a group of people who are good at reading the Qur'an but do not understand it and even commit acts of violence against fellow Muslims. This hadith raises a warning that reading fluently without understanding is stupid and dangerous.

This research aims to examine the effectiveness of singing the Al-Qur'an and its translation in increasing the understanding of listeners, especially mosque congregations. The views of the respondents, most of whom are mosque congregation members, are considered important because they play a role in making the mosque prosperous and spreading the truth of the Islamic religion. In this research, the activity of reciting the Al-Qur'an and its translation is the focus of the study to assess whether this approach can increase the local community's understanding of the teachings of the Al-Qur'an, which are delivered in easy-to-understand Indonesian. The views and responses of respondents, especially mosque congregations who are agents of da'wah and acculturation, are considered crucial in spreading Islamic religious values.

Although the number of respondents in this study was limited to only around 10 people, this was considered sufficient to provide a general picture of the views of mosque congregations regarding the effectiveness of singing the Qur'an and its translation in the context of everyday life. After field observations and data collection through questionnaires, three general indicators were identified that reflected the responses from mosque congregations as respondents. These indicators involve the clarity of the sound played through the mosque speakers, the agreement of the respondents as listeners, and personal preferences regarding research activities that have become a culture in the community around the Ulul Albab Islamic Boarding School. From the various answers given by respondents, the results of these responses have been summarized in the following table:

**Table 1.** Comprehensive Field Research Response Results

No.	Indicator	Response Results
1.	Clarity Indicator Response to the Clarity of the Voice of the Recited Al-Qur'an	90% Audible, 10% Inaudible
2.	Approval Indicator ( <i>Agreement</i> ) Respondents' approval of the singing of the Qur'an through mosque speakers	100% Agree
3.	Personal Preference Indicator ( <i>Personal Preference</i> ) Respondent's personal preferences for singing the Qur'an	90% Criticism 10% So-so
4.	Personal Indicator ( <i>Personal Preference</i> ) Respondent's personal tendencies towards reciting the Qur'an with or without translation	80% With Translation 20% Without Translation

5.	Argumentation Indicator ( <i>The Reasons</i> ) Reasons why respondents like or dislike the activity of singing the Qur'an	50% Cools the Heart 20% Worship Facilities 10% Learning Facilities 20% Didn't Comment
6.	Cultural Indicators ( <i>Culture Confirmation</i> ) Confirmation that the activity of singing the Qur'an has become a culture	100% Agree
7.	Effectiveness Indicators ( <i>Da'wah Effectiveness</i> ) The effectiveness of da'wah through singing the Qur'an and its translation through mosque speakers	90% Agree 10% Neutral
8.	Usability Indicators ( <i>Advantages</i> ) The benefits felt by respondents from the activity of singing the Qur'an and its translation	40% Understand the Content of the Qur'an 30% Achieve Rewards and Blessings 10% Reassuring 20% Didn't Comment
9.	Intensity Indicator ( <i>Reciting Intensity</i> ) The level of intensity of respondents in reading the Qur'an	60% Daily 10% 2-3x a Week 30% Once a Week
10.	Indicator Method ( <i>Including Translation</i> ) The number of respondents who studied with and without translation	50% With Translation 40% Sometimes 10% Never With Translation
11.	Comprehension Indicator ( <i>Understanding</i> ) Respondents' understanding of the meaning of the translation of the Qur'an they read	10% Understand 90% Don't (Yet) Understand

### Respondents' Personal Preferences for Reciting the Al-Qur'an and Its Translation

The first indicator is the sound clarity indicator clarity from the recitation of the Qur'an. The result was that only 1 in 10 people answered that they had never heard the recital of the Qur'an. After further observation by the researchers, it turned out that the reason was that the location of the respondent's house and the mosque were about or more than 2 KM away, which indicated that the sound came from the loudspeaker. The mosque cannot be heard very clearly within a 2 KM radius. And this also makes the mosque's loudspeaker media less effective in reaching larger audiences.

From the perspective of mass communication theory, it is a communication process using mass media, such as newspapers, radio, television, internet, and so on (McQuail, 2011). Mass communication has a paradigmatic nature and aims from various component patterns that are functionally connected (Ruliana & Lestari, 2019). Therefore, the activities in this research also certainly have this function and paradigmatic nature, namely spreading religious messages and also values and lessons from the Qur'an as a form of disseminating information through mass media.

The second indicator, namely, the approval indicator or agreement, assesses whether the respondents agree with the activities that have become a culture in this research. The results of the survey in the field showed that all respondents agreed to this activity, and the community received it well. According to the author, the community's acceptance cannot be separated from the historical factor that the Ulul Albab Islamic Boarding School mosque was previously established in the area, namely in 2005. Meanwhile, the residential area adjacent to the Ulul Albab Islamic Boarding School was only built in 2016 or a decade later.

Therefore, the assumption that can be concluded is that the recitation of the Qur'an, which has become a culture, has been heard by the community since they first lived in the Bumi Agnes Nanjung residential area, where the Ulul Albab Islamic Boarding School is located in the residential area. Apart from that, the activity of singing the Qur'an also provides a sign if it is sung before prayer, which indicates that the time for the prayer call to prayer will soon begin. On the other hand, the recital of the Qur'an after prayer time signals that congregational prayer activities in the mosque have ended.

From the point of view of cultural acculturation, several aspects are important to pay attention to, including the reaction of the local community as recipients of foreign culture, then the agents of acculturation who are none other than the students as implementers of activities and also the media used, namely loudspeakers from the mosque. As a step in understanding society as a whole, according to Farid Ahmad, a researcher must understand human

behavior (Rahman, 2021). The indicators above illustrate a positive response from the process of meeting two different cultures and languages. So it can make the chanting of the holy verses of the Qur'an familiar to hear.

Next, the third indicator is the personal preferences of the respondents regarding whether they like the activity of singing the Qur'an or whether it actually disturbs them. The results of field research prove that there are 1 in 10 people who feel normal about this activity, and the remaining 90% like and are used to hearing the recitation of the holy verses of the Qur'an through the speaker of the mosque.

The author's assumption regarding 1 respondent who answered neutral or normal about this activity was due to continuity regarding the place of residence before moving and living around the Ulul Albab Islamic Boarding School. In some mosques and Islamic boarding schools, the activity of singing the Qur'an is also commonplace and has become a habit to carry out, so some people are used to it and no longer feel strange.

As for the fourth indicator, namely the respondent's tendency towards reciting the Qur'an with or without translation. Based on the results shown in the table above, there were 20% of respondents who chose no translation or just the Qur'an in Arabic. However, the majority of respondents, 80%, chose this activity to be carried out accompanied by a translation. These results prove that the public prefers singing the Qur'an and its translation compared to singing the Qur'an only in Arabic.

For some Indonesians, especially those who do not understand Arabic, the translation of the Qur'an is very important to listen to. Because some people really listen carefully when the verses of the Qur'an are recited together with the translation, so that they can learn lessons and wisdom from the Qur'an that they may not know or have forgotten. Apart from that, for those *Hafidz* or memorize the Qur'an, listening to the recitation of the holy Qur'an verses provided by the Ulul Albab Islamic Boarding School mosque can also help them in repeating back to the memorization of the Qur'an that has been memorized.

Forgetting, in fact, is human nature. Because it is only God who never forgets and is All-Thorough (*Al-Khabir*). All humans experience natural forgetting as a process of mental activity that influences memory (Arma, 2015). This is of course also in line with one of the holy verses of the Qur'an below:

وَمَا نَنْتَظِرُ إِلَّا بِأَمْرِ رَبِّكَ ۚ لَهُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِينَا وَمَا خَلْفَنَا وَمَا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا

*"And we (Jibril) did not descend, except at the command of your Lord. To Him belongs everything that is in front of us, that is behind us, and everything that is between the two, and your Lord is never forgetful." (QS. Maryam 19: Verse 64) (Tim Penyempurnaan Terjemahan Al-Qur'an, 2019, p. 436).*

The fifth indicator is an indicator that discusses the reasons why respondents like or dislike the activity. It turns out that half of the total respondents (50%) found this activity to be soothing. 20% of respondents said that this activity could be a means of worship to gain blessings and rewards from Allah SWT. The next 20% of respondents did not give a reason, and those who considered it as a learning tool because a translation accompanied it were 10% of respondents as a minority answer.

Psychologically, the survey results on the 5th indicator above apparently dominate the function of the Al-Qur'an as a heart-soothing or psychological function of the Al-Qur'an. These results also prove the truth of the holy verses of the Qur'an below:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

*"(Namely) those who believe and their hearts become peaceful by remembering Allah. Remember, only by remembering Allah the heart becomes peaceful." (QS. Ar-Ra'd 13: Verse 28) (Al-Qur'an Translation Improvement Team, 2019)*

However, on the other hand, from the response results above, the author then analyzes the results of the 4th and 5th indicators, wherein the 4th indicator there are 80% of respondents like the Qur'an, which is recited with translation, but in The fifth indicator is that only 10% of respondents use this activity as a learning tool. This is, of course, very contradictory. According to the author, one of the contributing factors is the inconsistency of the students as implementers of activities in reciting the Qur'an. Because some students who are still small, under the age of 10, only recite the Qur'an without translation. As for students who are fluent in reciting the Qur'an and have been categorized as teenagers, it is recommended to recite the Qur'an with a translation, although it is not mandatory.

Furthermore, in the 6th indicator, which describes cultural confirmation, all respondents (100%) agreed that this activity had become a culture for the local community.

### **The purpose and benefits of singing the Qur'an and its translation**

In the 7th indicator, namely the indicator that discusses the effectiveness of the activity as a da'wah activity. The results were dominated by 90% of respondents who thought that this activity was effective as a da'wah method that could educate the local community, especially those who are Muslim, to understand the messages conveyed by the Qur'an. Meanwhile, the other 10% of respondents answered neutral or undecided.

Then the 8th indicator, namely the aspect that discusses the benefits of the activity. There were 40% of respondents, or 4 out of 10 people, answered that this activity was useful as a way to understand the contents of the Qur'an. This answer is also in accordance with the function of the Qur'an as a lesson and guide for the Muslim community. There is a relationship between science and the Qur'an, namely that the Qur'an can provide inspiration for knowledge, produce hypotheses and scientific analysis and become an object and source of knowledge (Warsitasari, 2021).

The next answer was that 30% of respondents felt that it was useful as a means of worship that was worth a reward. These results show that this activity provides additional activity for residents living around the mosque in listening to the recitation of the holy verses of the Qur'an. The next 30% of respondents did not comment at all, and the remaining 10% of respondents felt more psychological benefits, namely soothing the heart.

Worship facilities, as one of the benefits felt by respondents, apparently also coincide with one of the features of the Qur'an; as the Prophet Muhammad SAW said, *"Whoever reads one letter from the book of God, namely the Qur'an, then that person will get 1 good. From that, 1 goodness will grow and multiply into 10 goodness. I didn't say the alif lam min is one letter, but the alif is one letter, lam and mim also get the value of one letter."* (H.R. Bukhari) (Syarbini & Jamhari, 2012).

### **Respondents' Personal Values Regarding Understanding the Al-Qur'an and Its Translation**

Basically, the closest relationship in this research to the personal values of the mosque congregation as respondents lies in the understanding of what is heard through these entrenched activities. Apart from that, because it involves a translation of the Qur'an, which is also recited, understanding is the aim of this activity. Although each individual's understanding is very subjective to assess. However, the acculturation process involving the activities in this research should be able to create and foster good awareness and understanding for residents as listeners because the singing of the Qur'an is repeated every day without holidays, even on weekends.

As for the 9th indicator, which discusses the intensity of respondents in reading the Al-Qur'an independently, there were 60% of respondents admitted that they read the Al-Qur'an independently every day. Then, on the opposite side, namely, those who admitted that they rarely read the Qur'an independently at home or only once a week, there were 30% of respondents. Meanwhile, at least 10% of respondents admitted that they rarely recite the Qur'an independently or around 2 to 3 times a week. These results can also prove that the activity of singing the Qur'an can actually increase the intensity of studying the Qur'an for most people independently in their respective homes.

In modern times, advances in technology, of course, have both positive and negative impacts on the millennial generation. The positive is that it can make it easier for everyone to find information, but the negative can also be a nuisance or distraction for some children who cannot manage their time and themselves. The flow of globalization with the emergence of social media also makes it easier for Muslim students, especially those who focus on studying the science of the Qur'an and exegesis, namely *content creator* who discusses the Qur'an on their Instagram, like @QuranReview. In a study, *Living Qur'an*, content created by @QuranReview provides several impacts on its followers, such as cognitive impacts that provide new insights in understanding interpretations, affective effects that can create emotional and aesthetic dimensions when gaining new understanding and also behavioral effects that can create changes both in perspective and behavior (Al-Banna et al., 2022).

Next, the 10th indicator discusses methods for studying the Qur'an independently, which specifically explains whether the respondent involved read the translation as well or only read the Qur'an in Arabic. Based on the table above, there are half of the total respondents (50%) who also study translations of the Qur'an. Then there were 40% of respondents answered sometimes, and 10% answered that they never read the translation or only read the Qur'an in Arabic.

Background from the respondents themselves as active participants in the recitation assembly held at the Ulul Albab Islamic Boarding School mosque every Friday at dawn, also using the method *ready* led by Ustad Mulyana as the supervisor and leader of the Ulul Albab Islamic Boarding School. The method used by Ustad Mulyana first reads verses from the Qur'an, which are then followed by the entire congregation for only 2 to 3 verses. Then, the meaning of each word is examined from each verse using the reference book of Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantani's Tafsir, which in its explanation also explains the wisdom and concrete examples in everyday life so that it can be understood easily by the congregation.

The last indicator is the 11th indicator, which describes the respondents' understanding of the meaning of the translation of short letters that are commonly read, such as al-Fatihah, al-Ikhlas, al-Falaq and an-Nas. The results of the field survey were quite surprising because 90% of respondents did not answer or did not understand the meaning of one of the verses that came from these short letters. Meanwhile, the remaining 10% of respondents answered and stated they understood.

In the author's brief analysis, if compare with the 8th indicator revealing various benefits felt by respondents, namely that the majority of responses answered were as a means of learning. Of course, these results are very contradictory to the results shown by the 11th indicator above. Up to this point, the author assumes that the greatest benefit felt by listeners lies in its affective or psychological impact, namely reassuring the soul (A. Rasmussen, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

The philosophy of this research activity is as part of a routine program that students at the Ulul Albab Islamic Boarding School must carry out. The main goal is to get used to reading the Al-Qur'an and socialize the Al-Qur'an and its translation to residents who live side by side with the Islamic Boarding School. This activity also has a mission to spark people's interest in continuing to read the Al-Qur'an and its translations and participate in recitation assemblies organized by the Islamic Boarding School and open to the public.

In looking at the important points of all the indicators above regarding the advantages and disadvantages of research activities, several hypotheses can be identified. Negative points or shortcomings include the reach of mosque loudspeakers, which, as mass media, are still not effective in reaching the larger masses. Apart from that, the consistent implementation of activities by the students also has weaknesses, where, at some times, the recitation of the Al-Qur'an is carried out without reading the translation.

On the positive side or advantages, from a cultural perspective, this activity was well received by the community. The response results show that this activity is effective as a method of *da'wah*, which has become part of the culture. The positive impact was also felt by the students as implementers of the activities and the mosque congregation as listeners and respondents. For the students, this activity helps in *muroja'ah* or repeating their memorization of the Qur'an.

The local community feels positive impacts, including affective impacts that provide peace of mind, cognitive impacts that provide understanding and insight into the messages of the Qur'an through its translation, and conative impacts that spark interest in studying the Qur'an independently every day. As a recommendation, further efforts are needed to increase the effectiveness of mass media outreach, as well as increase the consistency of implementation of activities by students. In addition, research can be expanded to explore more deeply the social and cultural impacts of the activity of singing the Qur'an and its translation in various communities and locations.

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