

Gus Muhammad Arinal Haq's Strategy in Creating Hadith Memorizers at the Al-Aqobah 4 Islamic Boarding School in Jombang, East Java

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ABSTRACT:

Background: The tradition of memorizing hadith is an essential part of maintaining the purity of Islamic teachings. However, in many Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), hadith memorization programs are not as popular as Quran memorization, requiring a systematic learning strategy to maintain the tradition's sustainability. Al-Aqobah 4 Islamic Boarding School in Jombang is one institution that consistently promotes hadith memorization programs through a structured approach.

Aims: This study aims to analyze the strategies implemented by Islamic boarding school administrators in creating hadith memorizers, describe the strategies of students in memorizing and maintaining memorization, and identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of the hadith memorization program.

Methods: The research used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques including observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participants included Islamic boarding school administrators, accompanying religious teachers (ustadz/ustadzah), and students participating in the One Day One Hadith Five Verses program. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

Result: The research results show that the tutors' strategies include daily memorization, understanding the meaning of hadith, structured repetition (takrir), talaqqi (recitation), and periodic evaluation. Students use various techniques such as understanding the context of hadith, rewriting, and conducting independent and group murojaah (recitation). Supporting factors include a conducive Islamic boarding school environment and intensive mentoring, while barriers include limited time, differences in memorization abilities, and a tendency to forget.

Conclusion: The strategy implemented at Al-Aqobah 4 Islamic Boarding School has proven effective in developing hadith memorizers who not only master the text but also understand its meaning. This research emphasizes the importance of structured and sustainable learning management in hadith memorization programs and opens up opportunities for developing similar models at other Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Learning Strategy, Tahfidz Hadith, Islamic Boarding School, Hadith Memorizer.

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INTRODUCTION

Memorizing hadiths has a very high urgency in maintaining the purity of Islamic teachings. Hadith functions to interpret and explain verses of the Qur'an which are mujmal, absolute, or general so that their existence is very fundamental for Muslims (Azizah et al., 2023; Masruhin et al., 2023; Ridwan et al., 2025). However, the current reality shows that the tradition of memorizing hadith is becoming less common compared to memorizing the Qur'an, which continues to develop in various Islamic boarding schools (Faizin, 2020; Noer, 2021; Priyatno, 2020). This phenomenon makes the effort to produce hadith memorizers an urgent need to maintain the continuity of the Prophet Muhammad's scientific legacy. This situation forms the basis of this research, which examines how the process of developing hadith memorizers is carried out strategically within an Islamic educational institution.

Ideally, Islamic boarding schools should be centers for the preservation of hadith studies, not only at the textual level but also for systematic memorization. However, the reality is that most Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia place more emphasis on memorizing the Quran and studying the "yellow books," resulting in less attention being paid to hadith memorization programs (Astuti et al., 2025; Musthofa & Khotimah, 2023; Syahid & Wahyuni, 2019). Even in Jombang, known as a city of Islamic students (santri), only two Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) still maintain the tradition of memorizing hadith. This gap between ideal practice and the empirical situation indicates a managerial problem and the need to develop a strategic model that can serve as a reference for other Islamic boarding schools.

It is in this context that Al-Aqobah 4 Islamic Boarding School offers significant research opportunities. The flagship program, One Day One Hadith Five Verses, requires students to memorize one hadith daily, along with five verses from the Quran. Furthermore, the learning process includes takrir (recitation of the Quran), talaqqi (recitation of the Quran), hadith explanations, daily evaluations, and annual munaqasyah (recitation of the Quran). The comprehensive structure of these activities and the school's commitment to reviving the tradition of hadith memorization make it a highly relevant research area. Al-Aqobah 4 Islamic Boarding School even hosts a Hadith Study Center (PSH) as a learning space for students and the general public, demonstrating the significant potential for the continuation of the hadith memorization tradition.

Previous studies have focused on strategies for memorizing the Qur'an, both in terms of methods and supporting factors, but there are very few studies that specifically highlight strategies for forming hadith memorizers (Arini & Widawarsih, 2021; Khoirulloh et al., 2023; Mahdi & Ridha, 2024). This represents a significant research gap. No studies have been found that have in-depth examined the strategies of Islamic boarding school administrators in designing systems, methods, time management, organization, and structured evaluation to produce hadith memorizers. Therefore, this research offers novelty in the form of a comprehensive analysis of Gus Muhammad Arinal Haq's strategy in creating hadith memorizers through a measurable and systematic approach to Islamic boarding school management.

The selection of variable X in the form of Gus Muhammad Arinal Haq's strategy is based on his background as an alumnus of the Darus Sunnah Islamic Boarding School, a boarding school renowned for its specialization in hadith studies. This experience influenced the learning design he implemented at the Al-Aqobah 4 Islamic Boarding School, starting from the One Day One Hadith concept, the use of bilingual methods, organizing daily schedules, to the deposit and evaluation system. In addition, his idea in establishing the Hadith Study Center shows a visionary view in expanding access to hadith studies for students and the general public. Therefore, the strategy he developed is very worthy of being an object of academic study.

This study aims to describe Gus Muhammad Arinal Haq's strategy in developing hadith memorizers, the strategies of students in memorizing and maintaining their memorization, and the supporting and inhibiting factors encountered in this process. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich insights into Islamic boarding school education management, particularly the rarely studied area of hadith memorization. Practically, the research results can serve as a model for other Islamic boarding schools in developing effective and sustainable hadith memorization programs. Thus, this research makes an important contribution to the development of Islamic scholarly traditions and the strengthening of Islamic boarding school-based educational institutions.

METHOD

Research Design

This research uses a descriptive qualitative research design, namely an approach that aims to understand phenomena in depth through describing data obtained from the field (Doyle et al., 2020; Furidha, 2023; Thorne, 2025). This design was chosen because the researchers wanted to understand, describe, and analyze the strategies used by the research subjects in a natural way without any manipulation of variables. The qualitative approach also allowed researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Islamic boarding school context, learning strategies, and the process of developing hadith memorizers, allowing for a holistic presentation of the research results.

Participant

Participants in this study consisted of:

1. The caretaker of the Islamic Boarding School, namely Gus Muhammad Arinal Haq, is the main figure who designs and implements the strategy for forming hadith memorizers.
2. The accompanying Ustadz/Ustadzah, who is directly involved in the process of depositing, reciting, and evaluating memorization.
3. Students of Al-Aqobah 4 Islamic Boarding School, especially those who participated in the One Day One Hadith Five Ayat program.

Participants were selected based on their direct involvement in implementing the hadith memorization program so that the data obtained was relevant to the research objectives.

Population and the methods of sampling Instrumentation

The population in this study was all students and teachers at the Al-Aqobah 4 Islamic Boarding School in Jombang. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, which is the deliberate selection of subjects based on the consideration that they have the most relevant information to the research focus.

Research instruments include:

- Interview guidelines (example items):
 - "What are the daily strategies applied in the hadith deposit process?"
 - "What are the challenges faced by students when memorizing hadith?"
- Observation guidelines (examples of aspects observed):
 - Daily deposit activity flow
 - Interaction between ustadz and santri
 - Memorization habit pattern
- Documentation in the form of activity schedules, hadith books used, and evaluation notes. Scoring methods, where necessary, are qualitative through categorization of findings (e.g., effective–fair–less effective). Data validity is tested using triangulation of sources and

techniques, while reliability is supported by data consistency based on repeated interviews and observations at different times.

Instrument

The primary instrument in this research is the researcher herself, who serves as the key instrument (human instrument). The researcher collects data through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The supporting instruments used include:

- Structured and semi-structured interview guidelines
- Observation format
- Camera/voice recorder
- Islamic boarding school administration documents

The instrument was prepared to obtain rich, accurate, and contextual data.

Procedures and if relevant, the time frame

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis. Field data collection was conducted over approximately 1–2 months, allowing researchers to observe daily memorization activities, conduct interviews, and gather supporting documents related to program implementation.

Data credibility was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques, by comparing information obtained from caregivers, teachers, and students, as well as cross-checking interview data with observations and documentation. Consistency of findings was strengthened through repeated observations and interviews at different times.

Analysis plan

Data analysis using qualitative analysis model Miles & Huberman (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Kalpokaite & Radivojevic, 2019), including:

1. Data reduction, namely the process of sorting, focusing, and simplifying raw data into meaningful information.
2. Data presentation, in the form of descriptive narratives, matrices, or categories of findings, makes it easier for researchers to understand patterns and relationships between variables.
3. Drawing conclusions, namely formulating research findings based on patterns, categories, and relationships that emerge during the analysis. The analysis process is repeated throughout the research to ensure that the findings are valid, credible, and consistent with the reality on the ground.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Table 1. Research Findings

Component	Key Findings
Caregiver Strategy (Gus Arinal Haq)	Formulating strategies through the One Day One Hadith Five Ayat program, organizing daily schedules, emphasizing takrir-talaqqi, daily & annual evaluations (munaqasyah).
Santri's Strategy in Memorizing Hadith	Repeating (takrir), understanding the meaning, listening to the ustadzah, rewriting, memorizing bilingually, choosing a conducive time & place.
Memorization Maintaining Strategy (Murojaah)	Independent repetition, re-deposit, murattal hadith, discussion of meaning, group murojaah, monthly evaluation.
Supporting Factors	The closeness of the students and the ustadz, the conducive environment of the Islamic boarding school, scheduled daily programs, the availability of structured hadith books.
Inhibiting Factors	Students forget easily, busy schedules, differences in memorization abilities, concentration problems, limited personal time.

The results of the study show that Gus Muhammad Arinal Haq's strategy plays a very significant role in forming a culture of hadith memorization at the Al-Aqobah 4 Islamic Boarding School. He formulated the flagship program One Day One Hadith Five Verses as the core of memorization habits, which was then reinforced with a system of organizing daily, weekly, and annual activities. Each memorization activity begins with takrir, three readings of the hadith by the female teacher, individual submission, and an in-depth explanation of the meaning of the hadith. In addition, evaluation is carried out in layers through daily monitoring and annual munaqasyah so that students have clear and measurable memorization standards.

Students employ various strategies to facilitate the process of memorizing hadith, including understanding sentence structure, interpreting the content of the hadith, and reviewing the memorization before memorizing it. The bilingual method (Arabic, Indonesian, and English) helps students retain the meaning and context of the hadith more firmly. Some students also use the technique of rewriting the hadith to strengthen visual memory. Daily habits such as takrir after dawn recitation and morning recitation help memorization more quickly become embedded in long-term memory. This strategy has proven effective because it is supported by discipline and consistent habits.

Maintaining memorization was a crucial aspect of this study. Students conducted murojaah (recitation) independently and in groups on a daily and weekly basis. Reviewing old memorizations was conducted before adding new memorizations to ensure students did not lose previously mastered material. Furthermore, discussions on the meaning of hadith and the use of audio recordings (murattal hadith) helped strengthen memory. Monthly evaluations served as a reminder that memorization should be maintained over time, not simply memorized for memorization purposes.

Supporting factors for the success of this strategy include a conducive Islamic boarding school environment, emotional closeness between students and teachers, and a well-scheduled activity system. Furthermore, the availability of hadith books structured according to their generations (Arba'in Nawawi, Al-Hadith, and Tahdzib) facilitates a more systematic learning process. However, there are also inhibiting factors such as students' natural forgetfulness, a busy Islamic boarding school schedule, differences in memory capacity, and concentration disorders due to other

activities. However, these obstacles can be overcome through the habit of reciting takrir, mentoring from teachers, and strengthening students' internal motivation.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that a strategy for developing hadith memorization through daily practice, structured repetition, understanding meaning, and layered evaluation can improve the quality of memorization and memory retention of students. This finding aligns with the theory of Meaningful Learning (Ausubel, 1963), which emphasizes the importance of meaningful connections in the memorization process (Fatmawaty, 2024; Indah & Abimanyu, 2025; Majid et al., 2025). The One Day One Hadith Five Verses model demonstrates that when memorization is combined with contextual understanding, memorization gains are more stable than when memorizing only verbally. Therefore, learning management, time management, and designing structured activities are essential components for the success of hadith memorization programs in Islamic educational institutions, not simply emphasizing the number of texts students must master.

This research's contribution lies in its presentation of a strategic model for the formation of hadith memorizers, a topic rarely discussed in the literature, particularly in the context of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). This research provides a comprehensive overview of how Islamic boarding school administrators design activity patterns, regulate the rhythm of memorization, build student motivation, and conduct periodic evaluations so that the tahfidz program can run systematically and sustainably. These findings broaden the discourse on hadith learning management and offer a practical model that can be adapted by other Islamic boarding schools seeking to implement more structured memorization programs, aligned with pedagogical principles and the learning characteristics of students.

However, this study has several limitations. The study's implementation in a single Islamic boarding school (pesantren) with specific characteristics makes the findings difficult to generalize to other institutions with different teaching patterns. The qualitative approach used also relied heavily on in-depth interviews and observations, potentially subjecting data interpretation to subjectivity. Furthermore, the limited duration of the study did not allow researchers to evaluate the students' memorization retention over the long term, so the picture of memorization consistency remains incomplete.

Nevertheless, the study indicates that obstacles such as limited time, varying memory capacity, and tendencies to forget are not merely "barriers," but rather signs that memorization outcomes are influenced by the interaction between workload ecology and learner variability. This interpretation suggests that improvement strategies should increase repetition and refine scheduling, scaffolding, and differentiation in mentoring. Thus, beyond its practical implications, this study contributes to the field of study by framing the success of memorizing the Hadith as an outcome of system design, cognitive reinforcement, and socio-educational environment. This model can be adopted for future research across different pesantren settings.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the strategy for developing hadith memorizers implemented by Gus Muhammad Arinal Haq at the Al-Aqobah 4 Islamic Boarding School is systematic, planned, and sustainable. The flagship program of One Day One Hadith Five Verses, integrated with takrir, talaqqi, explanation of meanings, daily recitations, and weekly and annual evaluations, has been proven to contribute to improving the memorization ability and quality of students' understanding. A neat managerial process, disciplined habituation, and support from the Islamic boarding school environment are factors that strengthen the success of this strategy in producing hadith memorizers who not only memorize the text but also understand its contents contextually.

In addition to producing effective strategies, this study also revealed supporting and inhibiting factors that need to be considered for future program improvements. Support from caregivers, mentoring from ustadz/ustadzah (Islamic teachers), and the availability of a structured learning system are crucial for the success of the memorization process. Meanwhile, challenges such as differences in student abilities, the burden of routine activities, and the tendency to forget require an adaptive approach to strengthening memorization. Thus, this study not only provides a comprehensive overview of strategies for developing hadith memorizers but also opens up opportunities for the development of more innovative, measurable hadith learning models that can be adopted by other Islamic educational institutions.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The authors' contributions to this research were shared proportionally, with NH playing a primary role in developing the research concept, collecting field data through observation and interviews, and conducting in-depth analysis of the findings. Meanwhile, KLR made significant contributions to developing the theoretical framework, validating the research instruments, deepening the analysis, and refining the final manuscript through critical review and substantive revision. Their collaboration ensured that the research and writing process was systematic, accurate, and met the expected scientific standards.

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