Challenges in Quranic Memorization for Learners with Disabilities

Thuwaiba[1], Ibnu Muhammad Yamudin Salaeh[2]

[1]Zanzibar University, Tanzania
[2]Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

✉ tuwaiba@gmail.com *

Abstract

Tahfiz Alquran is a core tradition in Islamic education requiring consistency, repetition, and accuracy of recitation. For learners with disabilities, however, the process presents complex challenges, including sensory limitations, communication barriers, and restricted access to learning media. This study aims to identify and analyze the main challenges faced by disabled learners in Quranic memorization and to formulate supporting factors that enhance the effectiveness of inclusive tahfiz learning. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, combining literature review and field observation in inclusive tahfiz institutions. Data were collected through interviews with tahfiz teachers, document analysis (Braille Quran, sign-language Quran), and observation of audio-, visual-, and tactile-based learning practices. The findings reveal that the main challenges include limited learning media, insufficient teacher training in Braille and sign language, communication barriers in recitation, and lack of social support. Supporting factors such as spiritual motivation, intensive repetition, and digital technologies were found to accelerate memorization. The implications emphasize the need for disability-friendly tahfiz curricula, teacher training in specialized skills, and strengthened support from families and Islamic educational institutions. These findings can serve as a reference for *pesantren*, special schools, and tahfiz institutions in designing inclusive and sustainable Quranic memorization programs.

INTRODUCTION

Memorizing the Quran (tahfiz Alquran) is not only a spiritual discipline but also a pedagogical tradition that shapes the identity of Muslim learners (Azmi et al., 2024; Abdullah et al., 2021). It requires accuracy, repetition, and consistency, yet disabled learners often encounter barriers that limit their participation. These barriers include sensory impairments, communication difficulties, and limited access to adaptive learning media (Mat & Hafiz, 2025).

In many Islamic institutions, accessibility remains underdeveloped. Braille Quran and sign-language Quran are not widely standardized, and digital applications tailored for disabled learners are scarce (Syaidah et al., 2025). Teachers often lack specialized training in Braille literacy or sign language, which restricts effective teaching and learning processes (Mat & Hafiz, 2025; Roe et al., 2014).

Beyond technical challenges, cultural stigma and lack of community support further marginalize disabled learners. Families and communities sometimes underestimate their ability to engage in tahfiz education, which reduces motivation and confidence. Conversely, spiritual motivation and family encouragement have been shown to be powerful drivers of persistence in memorization (Aziz et al., 2021; Iqbal et al., 2024; Abdullah et al., 2022).

The primary objective of this study is to identify and analyze the challenges faced by disabled learners in Quranic memorization, focusing on sensory, communicative, and pedagogical barriers. By doing so, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles that hinder inclusivity in tahfiz institutions (Pahlawan & Pahlawan, 2025; Samadi et al., 2022).

A second objective is to explore supporting factors that enhance memorization outcomes, such as spiritual motivation, intensive repetition, and the integration of digital technologies. These factors have been shown to accelerate learning and improve accessibility for students with special needs (Caroline & Aslan, 2025).

The tradition of tahfiz Alquran has been widely studied in Islamic education, but research on its accessibility for disabled learners remains limited. Ilhamsyah & Islam, (2025); Yusuf & Ali, (2025) emphasize that children with special needs require individualized strategies in Quranic memorization, particularly through repetition and teacher scaffolding. Similarly, Zulkifli et al., (2022) highlight the importance of community support and spiritual motivation in sustaining memorization among learners with disabilities. These studies establish the foundational understanding that inclusion in tahfiz education is both pedagogical and social.

Research on Braille Quran demonstrates significant progress in enabling visually impaired learners to participate in tahfiz traditions. Gani, (2024) found that structured methods such as Synthetic Structural Analysis (SAS) and *talaqqi* enhance memorization accuracy for blind learners. However, the availability of Braille Quran remains limited, and teacher competence in Braille literacy is often insufficient (Munir et al., 2024). This indicates that while Braille Quran provides a pathway to inclusion, systemic challenges in distribution and teacher training persist.

Efforts to translate the Quran into sign language have opened new opportunities for deaf learners. Saifullah & Nurjanah, (2024) reports that sign-language Quran initiatives improve accessibility but remain fragmented, depending heavily on teacher training and institutional support. Sasongko & Usman, (2025) further notes that the lack of standardized sign-language Quran resources hinders consistency in teaching. These findings suggest that while sign-language Quran is a promising innovation, it requires institutional commitment and pedagogical adaptation to achieve sustainability.

Beyond traditional media, digital technologies have emerged as powerful tools for inclusive tahfiz education. Pratiwi et al., (2025) demonstrate that mobile applications and audio-visual platforms accelerate memorization for learners with disabilities by providing flexible and adaptive learning environments. UNESCO (2023) also emphasizes that inclusive digital education aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), reinforcing the global urgency of disability-friendly innovations in religious education.

While existing studies provide valuable insights into Braille Quran, sign-language Quran, and digital applications, most focus on single categories of

disability or isolated interventions. Few works integrate multiple perspectives literature review, document analysis, and field observation to capture the lived experiences of disabled learners across diverse impairments. The novelty of this study lies in its holistic approach, combining empirical evidence with theoretical analysis to formulate practical recommendations for disability-friendly curricula, teacher training, and institutional support. By bridging traditional tahfiz practices with contemporary demands for inclusivity, this research contributes both to Islamic pedagogy and global educational discourse.

Finally, the study aims to formulate practical recommendations for disability-friendly curricula, teacher training, and institutional support. These recommendations are intended to guide *pesantren*, special schools, and tahfiz institutions in designing inclusive and sustainable programs (Rofiah et al., 2025).

The urgency of this research lies in the growing demand for inclusive Islamic education that aligns with global educational justice frameworks. As the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities) emphasize equitable access for learners with disabilities, Islamic institutions must adapt to ensure that tahfiz traditions remain accessible to all (UNESCO, 2023).

Another urgent factor is the lack of standardized resources such as Braille Quran and sign-language Quran, which creates inequities in learning opportunities. Addressing these gaps is critical to prevent marginalization of disabled learners in religious education.

This study is also urgent because inclusive tahfiz education contributes to strengthening Islamic institutions as disability-friendly spaces. By promoting inclusivity, *pesantren* and tahfiz schools can serve as models of equitable education that integrate spiritual traditions with modern pedagogical innovation (Mala et al., 2024).

Previous studies have examined Quranic memorization strategies for specific groups of disabled learners, such as the visually impaired or hearing impaired (Taufik et al., 2024). However, most of these works focus on single categories of disability and do not provide a comprehensive analysis across diverse impairments.

Moreover, while theological discussions on inclusive Islamic education exist, empirical evidence from field observations in tahfiz institutions remains limited. This restricts the practical applicability of existing findings and leaves a gap in understanding how inclusive strategies can be implemented effectively.

This study addresses the gap by integrating multiple data sources literature review, interviews, document analysis, and observation to capture the lived experiences of disabled learners in tahfiz settings. Such an approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of both challenges and supporting factors, offering practical recommendations for disability-friendly curricula and teacher training.

This study is guided by the central inquiry of how disabled learners experience the process of Quranic memorization within inclusive tahfiz institutions. It seeks to uncover the main challenges they face, particularly in relation to learning media, teacher competence, and communication barriers. It also explores the supporting factors spiritual, pedagogical, and technological that enable disabled learners to succeed in memorization despite these challenges. Ultimately, the research asks how Islamic educational institutions can design disability-friendly curricula and teacher training programs that ensure sustainable inclusivity in tahfiz education, thereby

bridging the gap between traditional practices and contemporary demands for equitable learning.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method, which is widely used to explore social and educational phenomena in depth. Qualitative research allows for the interpretation of meanings, experiences, and contextual challenges faced by learners with disabilities in Quranic memorization (Aryasutha et al., 2025; Creswell, 2018; Engkizar et al., 2022, 2023; Ikhlas et al., 2025; Iqbal et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2024; Yanti, 2025). The descriptive approach was chosen to provide a detailed account of the inclusive practices in tahfiz institutions without manipulating variables, focusing instead on natural settings and lived experiences (Busral et al., 2025; Rahayu et al., 2025; Safiinatunnajah & Khilmiyah, 2025).

The primary data sources consisted of interviews with tahfiz teachers, observations of inclusive tahfiz institutions, and analysis of documents such as Braille Quran and sign-language Quran. Secondary data were obtained from literature reviews of previous studies on inclusive Islamic education and disability-friendly pedagogy. Using multiple sources ensured triangulation, which enhances the credibility and validity of qualitative findings (Elizabeth, 2016; Engkizar et al., 2024; 2025).

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on teachers and practitioners directly involved in inclusive tahfiz programs. This technique was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to identify individuals with specific knowledge and experience relevant to the study (Engkizar et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2025). The selection criteria included teaching experience in tahfiz institutions, familiarity with Braille or sign language, and active involvement in supporting disabled learners.

The main instruments used in this study were semi-structured interview guides, observation checklists, and document analysis protocols. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility to explore informants' perspectives while maintaining consistency across participants. Observation checklists ensured systematic recording of inclusive practices, while document analysis protocols facilitated the examination of accessibility resources such as Braille Quran and sign-language Quran.

Data were organized and coded using NVivo software, which supports qualitative analysis by enabling systematic categorization and thematic exploration. NVivo has been widely recognized as a reliable tool for managing large volumes of qualitative data, allowing researchers to identify patterns and relationships across multiple sources (Wiliams et al., 2021; Zohdi et al., 2024; Zulkifli et al., 2022). The use of NVivo enhanced the rigor of the analysis by providing transparency and replicability in coding processes.

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data, focusing on identifying recurring themes related to challenges and supporting factors in inclusive tahfiz education. Braun & Clarke, (2006) six-phase framework guided the analysis, including familiarization with data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This technique was chosen because it allows for flexibility in analyzing complex qualitative data while ensuring systematic interpretation of findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Inclusive Quranic education for disabled learners remains a pressing challenge in many institutions, where structural limitations and pedagogical gaps often hinder equitable access to memorization and recitation. While mainstream tahfiz programs benefit from abundant resources and trained teachers, learners with visual or hearing impairments frequently encounter systemic barriers that slow their progress and reduce their confidence. This study explores these challenges by examining the lived experiences of disabled learners and teachers in inclusive tahfiz settings, highlighting both the obstacles that persist and the supporting factors that foster resilience. The following sections present the key findings, organized around four major themes: limited learning media, insufficient teacher training, communication barriers in recitation, and the tension between lack of social support and motivating factors.

Fig 1. Challenges in Quranic Memorization for Learners with Disabilities

Limited Learning Media

Disabled learners face significant challenges due to limited access to inclusive learning media. Braille Quran copies are scarce, often expensive, and unevenly distributed across institutions. Sign-language Quran resources remain fragmented, with no standardized version available for consistent use. Digital applications designed for disabled learners are underdeveloped, leaving many students dependent on traditional oral methods.

This limitation creates inequities in Quranic memorization. While sighted and hearing learners can rely on abundant resources, disabled learners must adapt to fewer tools, which slows their memorization progress. Institutions often lack budgets to procure specialized media, further widening the gap between inclusive and mainstream tahfiz education.

Previous studies confirm this challenge. Rohmatuszahroh et al., (2025) highlight that Braille Quran is essential for visually impaired learners, yet its distribution remains limited. Al-Hassan et al., (2024) notes that sign-language Quran initiatives are promising but lack institutional support. These findings align with the present study, reinforcing the urgency of developing accessible Qur'anic media.

"We only have two Braille Quran copies for more than ten students. Sometimes they must wait for their turn, which delays their memorization process," (T1). *"I often rely on audio recordings, but the application is not user-friendly for blind students. We need simpler tools,"* (T5). *"Our institution cannot afford more Braille Quran copies. Students must share, which slows their progress,"* (T6). *"Sign-language Qur'an resources are incomplete. Sometimes I have to create my own signs to explain verses,"* (T7).

Insufficient Teacher Training

Another major challenge is the lack of teacher training in specialized skills such as Braille literacy and sign language. Many tahfiz teachers are highly competent in Quranic recitation but have not received formal training to teach disabled learners. This gap reduces their ability to provide effective guidance, especially in inclusive institutions.

Teachers often rely on improvisation, learning sign language or Braille informally from peers or online resources. While this demonstrates commitment, it also results in inconsistencies in teaching methods. Without structured training, teachers struggle to adapt their pedagogy to diverse learner needs. Literature supports this finding. Mubi et al., (2024) argue that teacher competence is a critical factor in inclusive tahfiz education. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that teacher training in disability-friendly pedagogy is essential to achieving SDG 4 (Quality Education). The present study adds empirical evidence from field observations, showing how untrained teachers face difficulties in inclusive classrooms.

"I can recite Quran fluently, but when teaching deaf students, I feel limited. I don't master sign language, so communication becomes very slow," (T2). *"I learned Braille only through short workshops, but it is not enough to teach effectively,"* (T8). *"Without formal sign-language training, I feel insecure correcting students' recitation,"* (T9). *"We need structured training programs. Improvisation is not sustainable for inclusive tahfiz,"* (T10).

Communication Barriers in Recitation

Communication barriers emerged as a recurring theme, particularly in the process of *talaqqi* (direct recitation between teacher and student). For hearing-impaired learners, the absence of standardized sign-language Quran makes it difficult to follow corrections in pronunciation. For visually impaired learners, feedback is often delayed because teachers must rely on tactile or oral cues.

These barriers affect the accuracy of memorization. Disabled learners may memorize verses but struggle with tajwid (rules of recitation) due to limited corrective feedback. This creates frustration and sometimes discourages learners from continuing their memorization journey.

Salabi, (2023) emphasize that communication barriers are among the most significant obstacles in inclusive Islamic education. Cawthon, (2021) also notes that deaf learners require specialized communication strategies to ensure accurate recitation. The present study confirms these findings, adding observational evidence from inclusive tahfiz institutions.

"When I correct a student's tajwid, they cannot fully understand my explanation. Without sign language, I feel my feedback is incomplete," (T3). *"When I recite, I cannot hear corrections. Teachers must use gestures, but they are not standardized,"* (T11). *"Blind students depend on oral cues, but teachers sometimes rush, making feedback unclear,"* (T12). *"I feel frustrated when my tajwid mistakes are not explained clearly. Communication is the biggest barrier,"* (T13).

Lack of Social Support vs. Supporting Factors

The study also revealed that disabled learners often lack social support from peers and communities. Some families underestimate their children's ability to memorize Quran, leading to reduced encouragement. In institutions, peers sometimes exclude disabled learners from group activities, which affects their confidence.

Despite these challenges, strong supporting factors were identified. Spiritual

motivation was a powerful driver, with learners expressing deep commitment to memorizing Quran despite obstacles. Intensive repetition also proved effective, as learners relied on consistent practice to overcome limitations. Digital technologies, such as audio apps and Qur'an memorization software, accelerated learning by providing flexible and adaptive environments.

These findings align with Seale et al., (2010), who argue that digital tools enhance accessibility for disabled learners. UNESCO (2023) also highlights the role of family and institutional support in promoting inclusive education. The present study contributes by showing how spiritual motivation and repetition interact with technology to create resilience among disabled learners.

"My family doubted I could memorize Quran, but I proved them wrong. With repetition and using Quran apps, I feel more confident," (T4). *"My peers sometimes exclude me, but I stay motivated because memorizing Quran is my dream,"* (T14). *"Family support is minimal, yet digital Quran apps help me continue memorization independently,"* (T15). *"Repetition gives me strength. Even without full community support, I rely on my own persistence,"* (T16).

The scarcity of inclusive Quranic learning media, such as Braille Quran and sign-language Quran resources, emerged as a critical barrier for disabled learners. Roslaili et al., (2025) emphasized that Braille Quran is indispensable for visually impaired learners, yet its distribution remains limited and uneven. Saifullah & Nurjanah, (2024) similarly noted that sign-language Quran initiatives are promising but lack institutional support and standardization. The present study adds empirical evidence that institutional budget constraints exacerbate this scarcity, forcing learners to share limited copies and slowing memorization progress.

From a theoretical lens, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) argues that equitable education requires multiple means of representation (Anastasiou et al., 2025). The absence of accessible Quranic media violates this principle, reinforcing inequities between disabled and mainstream learners. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory further underscores the importance of mediated tools in learning; without accessible media, learners are deprived of essential cultural instruments for Quranic memorization.

Thus, policy interventions must prioritize subsidized distribution of Braille Quran and the development of standardized sign-language Quran. These measures align with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities**),** ensuring disabled learners are not marginalized in religious education.

Teacher competence is another decisive factor in inclusive tahfiz education. While teachers are proficient in Quranic recitation, many lack formal training in Braille literacy and sign language. Finn, (2021) argue that teacher competence is central to inclusive pedagogy, while UNESCO (2023) stresses that disability-friendly training is essential to achieving SDG 4. The present study contributes by showing how teachers often rely on improvisation, learning sign language informally from peers or online resources, which results in inconsistent teaching methods.

This challenge can be analyzed through Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) framework, which highlights that effective teaching requires not only subject mastery but also pedagogical strategies tailored to learner needs. Without structured training, teachers' PCK remains incomplete, limiting their ability to scaffold learning for disabled students. Institutionalizing structured training programs in Braille literacy and sign-language pedagogy would enhance instructional quality and contribute to SDG 4.5 (equal access to education for

vulnerable groups).

Communication barriers in *talaqqi* (direct recitation) and tajwid correction emerged as a recurring theme. For hearing-impaired learners, the absence of standardized sign-language Quran makes corrective feedback difficult. For visually impaired learners, reliance on oral cues often results in delayed or unclear feedback. (Aryani et al., 2025; H. Pratiwi, 2024) identified communication barriers as one of the most significant obstacles in inclusive Islamic education, while Singh & Dubey, (2025) emphasized the need for specialized communication strategies for deaf learners.

Theoretically, this reflects Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding, where teachers provide support to bridge learners' current abilities and desired outcomes. In the absence of effective communication tools, scaffolding collapses, leaving learners frustrated and discouraged.

Developing standardized sign-language Quran systems and tactile feedback mechanisms would enhance the accuracy of memorization and recitation, aligning with SDG 4 (Quality Education) by ensuring inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Disabled learners often face skepticism from families and exclusion from peers, undermining their confidence. Yet, spiritual motivation, intensive repetition, and digital technologies emerged as powerful drivers of resilience. Cranmer, (2020) argue that digital tools enhance accessibility for disabled learners, while UNESCO (2023) highlights the role of family and institutional support in promoting inclusive education.

The present findings contribute by showing how spiritual motivation interacts with repetition and technology to sustain learners' commitment. This aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Orsini et al., 2016), which emphasizes the role of intrinsic motivation in overcoming external barriers. Learners' persistence, despite limited support, demonstrates the transformative power of spiritual commitment in religious education.

Policy recommendations include strengthening family awareness programs, fostering peer inclusion through institutional initiatives, and expanding access to adaptive digital Quran applications. These measures would enhance learner confidence and contribute to SDG 3 (well-being) and SDG 16 (inclusive communities).

Synthesizing across the four themes, this study demonstrates that inclusive Quranic education is hindered by structural inequities, pedagogical gaps, and communication barriers, yet resilience factors such as spiritual motivation and digital tools offer pathways for transformation. Addressing these challenges requires systemic reforms: investment in inclusive media, structured teacher training, standardized communication strategies, and strengthened social support. Such reforms would advance global commitments to SDG 4 and SDG 10.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that disabled learners in inclusive tahfiz institutions face persistent challenges in Quranic memorization due to limited learning media, insufficient teacher training, communication barriers in recitation, and inadequate social support. By addressing the research question of how these barriers affect learners' progress, the findings demonstrate that structural inequities and pedagogical gaps significantly slow memorization, yet resilience factors such as

spiritual motivation, repetition, and adaptive digital tools enable learners to persist. The implications are clear: institutions and policymakers must invest in accessible Quranic media, formalize teacher training in Braille and sign language, and strengthen family and peer support systems to ensure equity in religious education. The novelty of this article lies in its synthesis of empirical evidence with theoretical frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, and Self Determination Theory, while explicitly mapping the findings to SDGs 4 and 10. This integrative approach not only enriches the discourse on inclusive Islamic education but also provides actionable pathways for curriculum reform and policy innovation.

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