



Motivation for People with Disabilities to Memorize the Quran

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Abstract

Memorizing the Quran (tahfiz Alquran) is both a profound spiritual practice and an intellectual challenge, particularly for individuals with disabilities who often encounter structural and pedagogical barriers in religious education. This study aims to identify and analyze the motivational factors that sustain their persistence in Quranic memorization and to explain how motivation functions as both a psychological and socio-religious force. Using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews and participatory observation in inclusive Islamic education institutions, all data were analyzed thematically with the assistance of NVivo 12 software to identify consistent motivational patterns. The findings reveal six major themes. Intrinsic motivations include faith commitment, which anchors memorization as an act of devotion, spiritual reward, which provides continuous encouragement, and self-actualization, which affirms that disability does not limit spiritual or intellectual achievement. Extrinsic motivations consist of family support, which nurtures confidence, teacher encouragement, which strengthens persistence through patient guidance and adaptive methods, and institutional facilities, which provide accessible and inclusive learning environments. These findings highlight that motivation operates not only as an internal drive but also as a socio-religious force that empowers disabled learners to overcome barriers, achieve success in Quranic memorization, and affirm their dignity within Islamic education.

INTRODUCTION

Memorizing the Quran (tahfiz Alquran) has historically been considered both a spiritual obligation and an intellectual pursuit in Islamic tradition (Awang et al., 2025; Abdullah et al., 2021). It is not only a means of preserving the sacred text but also a pathway to moral refinement and spiritual closeness to Allah. Within Islamic education, tahfiz programs are highly valued, often serving as a benchmark of religious excellence (Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025; Sada et al., 2024).

For learners with disabilities, however, the journey of memorization is marked by unique challenge (Abdullah et al., 2025; Bensala et al., 2025; Yusak et al., 2022). Structural barriers, pedagogical limitations, and social stigma frequently hinder their participation, making their persistence in this practice both remarkable and worthy of scholarly attention. Inclusive education perspectives emphasize that

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children with special needs have equal rights to access religious learning, including Quranic memorization. Yet, cultural attitudes often frame disability as a burden, limiting opportunities for participation (Rahmi et al., 2025; Yusron et al., 2024).

This highlights the importance of shifting paradigms toward inclusivity in Islamic pedagogy. Motivation emerges as a central factor in sustaining disabled learners' engagement. Theories such as Self-Determination Theory argue that intrinsic drivers like autonomy, competence, and relatedness are essential for persistence in learning (Deci & Ryan, 2012). In Quranic memorization, these dimensions intersect with faith commitment and spiritual reward, making motivation both psychological and socio-religious.

The primary objective of this study is to identify and analyze the motivational factors that sustain disabled learners in Quranic memorization programs. By focusing on both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how motivation functions as a psychological and socio-religious force.

A secondary objective is to explore how these motivational factors can be embedded into curriculum design and pedagogical strategies. This ensures that tahfiz programs are not only spiritually enriching but also inclusive and accessible to learners with diverse needs (Novitasari, 2025). The study also aims to contribute to the broader discourse on inclusive education within Islamic contexts. By highlighting the voices and experiences of disabled learners, it emphasizes the importance of equity and dignity in religious learning.

Ultimately, the research intends to offer practical recommendations for educators, institutions, and policymakers to strengthen inclusive pedagogies in Quranic memorization programs, aligning with the principles of *maqasid al-shari'ah* that prioritize justice and human dignity (Rabbani et al., 2025; Rifai et al., 2025).

The urgency of this study lies in the growing recognition that inclusive education must extend beyond secular subjects to encompass religious learning. Disabled learners often face exclusion from tahfiz programs due to inadequate facilities, untrained teachers, and societal misconceptions. Addressing these issues is critical to ensuring equal access to religious knowledge.

Furthermore, motivation is a decisive factor in educational success. Without understanding the motivational drivers of disabled learners, efforts to design inclusive curricula may remain superficial. Research in inclusive boarding schools shows that tailored strategies significantly improve persistence in Quranic memorization (Ahmad et al., 2025). In addition, the lack of empirical research on disabled learners in Quranic memorization underscores the need for urgent scholarly attention. While inclusive education has been widely studied in general contexts, its application in Islamic pedagogy remains underexplored (Wardhani & Khadavi, 2025).

By investigating motivation in tahfiz programs, this research responds to an urgent need for evidence-based strategies that affirm the dignity and capabilities of disabled learners in religious education, while also contributing to the development of inclusive Islamic curricula. Although Quranic memorization has been widely studied in Islamic education, most existing research focuses on mainstream learners and pedagogical techniques rather than the experiences of disabled learners. Studies often highlight methods of memorization, curriculum design, or teacher strategies, but they rarely address the psychological and socio-religious dimensions of motivation that sustain persistence among learners with disabilities. As a result, the

voices and lived experiences of disabled students in tahfiz programs remain underrepresented in scholarly discourse, leaving a gap in understanding how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations interact to support their success.

Research on Quranic memorization has traditionally focused on pedagogical techniques and cognitive strategies for mainstream learners. Studies highlight methods such as repetition, visualization, and teacher-led instruction as effective approaches to sustaining memorization (Javed & Pattoki, 2023). However, these works often overlook the unique challenges faced by learners with disabilities, particularly in contexts where accessibility and inclusivity are limited. The absence of tailored strategies for disabled learners underscores the need to examine how motivation functions as a sustaining force in their participation.

Inclusive education literature emphasizes the importance of equity and access for learners with disabilities, including within religious education. Gale et al., (2017) argue that inclusive pedagogy requires not only structural adjustments but also recognition of learners' diverse motivations and capacities. In Islamic contexts, Haryati et al., (2024); Yasmeen et al., (2019) highlights that disabled learners often rely on family and teacher support to persist in religious learning, suggesting that extrinsic motivation plays a decisive role in their success. These findings point to the necessity of integrating motivational analysis into inclusive Quranic memorization programs.

Theories of motivation, particularly Self-Determination Theory, provide a useful framework for understanding persistence in learning. Intrinsic drivers such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness align closely with faith commitment, spiritual reward, and self-actualization in Quranic memorization. At the same time, extrinsic supports such as family encouragement and institutional facilities resonate with the broader literature on inclusive education, which stresses the importance of external reinforcement for learners with disabilities (Lutfi et al., 2025).

Despite these insights, empirical studies specifically addressing disabled learners in tahfiz programs remain scarce. Bhurawala, (2025) note that while inclusive Islamic schools have begun to accommodate learners with disabilities, research has yet to fully capture their lived experiences and motivational drivers. This gap highlights the need for qualitative approaches that foreground the voices of disabled learners, using tools such as NVivo to analyze thematic patterns. By situating motivation within both psychological and socio-religious dimensions, this study contributes to filling a critical gap in the literature on inclusive Islamic education.

Furthermore, inclusive education literature within Islamic contexts tends to emphasize access and rights, yet provides limited empirical evidence on how motivation functions as a sustaining force in religious learning. Few studies employ qualitative approaches that capture the depth of disabled learners' perspectives, particularly through thematic analysis supported by tools such as NVivo. This research therefore fills an important gap by exploring motivation as both a psychological construct and a socio-religious force, offering new insights into how disabled learners overcome barriers and affirm their dignity in Quranic memorization programs.

Guided by these considerations, the study asks how intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors sustain disabled learners in Quranic memorization programs. It explores the ways in which faith commitment, spiritual reward, and self-actualization provide inner strength, while family support, teacher

encouragement, and institutional facilities create external conditions that foster persistence. The central inquiry is how motivation operates not only as an internal drive but also as a socio-religious force that empowers learners to overcome barriers, achieve success in memorization, and affirm their dignity within Islamic education. Furthermore, the study considers how motivational strategies can be embedded into curriculum design and pedagogical practice to strengthen inclusive approaches in tahfiz programs.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design, which is particularly appropriate for exploring the lived experiences and motivational factors of disabled learners in Quranic memorization programs. Qualitative inquiry allows researchers to capture the depth and complexity of human perspectives, emphasizing meaning rather than measurement (Akbar et al., 2025; Arafat et al., 2025; Aryasutha et al., 2025; Creswell, 2018; Engkizar et al., 2022, 2023; Kaema & Ulwi, 2025; Pambudi et al., 2023). By adopting a phenomenological approach, the study sought to understand how learners interpret their experiences of memorization and the role of motivation in sustaining persistence.

The primary data sources consisted of disabled learners enrolled in inclusive Islamic education institutions offering tahfiz programs. Supplementary data were obtained from teachers and family members to provide triangulation and contextual understanding. Such multi-perspective data collection is essential in inclusive education research, as it ensures that findings reflect both individual experiences and the broader socio-religious environment (Elizabeth, 2016; Kaema & Ulwi, 2025).

Data were collected using semi-structured interview guides and participatory observation protocols. Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility while maintaining focus on key themes, making them effective for exploring motivation in depth (Akyurek et al., 2022; Arafat et al., 2025; Busral et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2025; Lisyawati et al., 2023; Zumratun, 2023). Observations were conducted in classroom and institutional settings to capture interactions between learners, teachers, and facilities, thereby enriching the data with contextual insights.

The study involved 15 disabled learners as primary informants, complemented by 5 teachers and 5 family members, resulting in a total of 25 participants. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that enables researchers to deliberately choose participants who can provide rich and relevant information (Adel et al., 2025; Arafat et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2024; Irwandi et al., 2023; Maulana, 2025; Pambudi et al., 2023). This approach ensured that the sample represented diverse disabilities and learning contexts within tahfiz programs.

All interview transcripts and observation notes were organized and coded using NVivo 12 software. NVivo facilitates systematic management of qualitative data, enabling researchers to identify themes and relationships across large datasets (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The use of software enhanced the rigor and transparency of the analysis process.

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data, focusing on identifying recurring patterns of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Braun & Clarke, (2006) describe thematic analysis as a flexible method for analyzing qualitative data, allowing researchers to move from descriptive coding to interpretive themes. This

technique was particularly suited to uncovering how motivation functions as both a psychological construct and a socio-religious force in Quranic memorization.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis using NVivo 12 revealed six major motivational themes that sustain disabled learners in Quranic memorization programs. These themes are divided into intrinsic motivations faith commitment, spiritual reward, and self actualization and extrinsic motivations family support, teacher encouragement, and institutional facilities. Together, they illustrate how motivation functions as both a psychological construct and a socio religious force, empowering learners to overcome barriers and affirm their dignity within Islamic education.

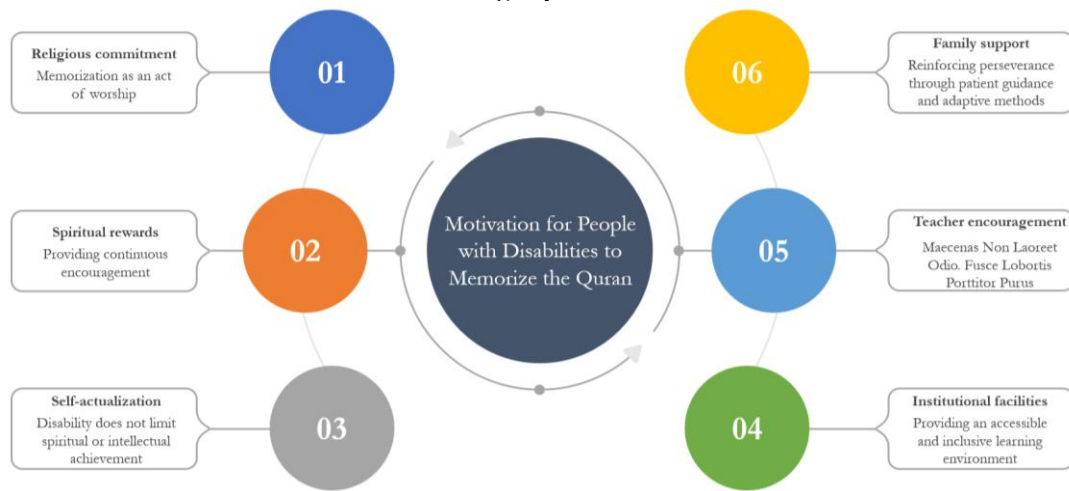


Fig 1. Six Motivations for People with Disabilities to Memorize the Quran
Faith commitment

Faith commitment anchored memorization as an act of devotion. Learners consistently emphasized that their persistence was rooted in worship, perceiving memorization as a sacred duty rather than an academic exercise. This orientation provided resilience against physical and social barriers. Challenges were reframed as opportunities for spiritual growth. Even when fatigue or difficulty arose, learners viewed their effort as part of a spiritual journey, strengthening their relationship with Allah. Faith commitment thus became a powerful source of endurance.

Informant voices: “Every verse I memorize is a form of worship, so I continue even when it is difficult” (A). “I see memorization as my duty to Allah, and this keeps me moving forward” (G). “Even when I feel tired, I remind myself that this is my path to paradise” (H). “Faith is the reason I never give up, even when others doubt me” (R).

Spiritual reward

Spiritual reward provided continuous encouragement. Learners believed their effort would be rewarded in this life and the hereafter, sustaining persistence even in moments of struggle. This expectation of divine blessing gave learners emotional strength and hope. It allowed them to endure long hours of practice and overcome frustration, reinforcing perseverance through spiritual anticipation.

Informant voices: “I know that every effort will be rewarded by Allah, and this keeps me strong” (B). “When I memorize, I imagine the blessings waiting for me, and it gives me energy” (I). “The thought of reward in the hereafter makes me patient with every challenge” (J). “I believe angels accompany me when I recite, and that motivates me deeply” (K).

Self-Actualization

Self-actualization affirmed that disability did not limit achievement. Learners viewed memorization as proof of their capability and dignity, strengthening self-esteem and accomplishment. This process empowered learners to challenge societal perceptions of disability. Memorization became a way to affirm their identity as capable Muslims, reinforcing confidence and resilience.

Informant voices: *"When I finish a surah, I feel proud because it shows my disability cannot stop me"* (C). *"Completing verses makes me realize I am stronger than people think"* (K). *"Memorization gives me confidence that I can achieve something great despite my condition"* (L). *"Every milestone proves I am equal to others in faith and learning"* (M).

Family support

Family support nurtured confidence and reduced isolation. Parents and siblings provided encouragement and companionship, reinforcing persistence. Learners reported that family involvement gave them strength to continue memorization even when discouraged. Emotional reinforcement from family members created a supportive environment of acceptance.

Informant voices: *"My parents always tell me that my effort is valuable, and my siblings help me practice"* (D). *"My mother listens to me recite every night, and it makes me feel loved"* (M). *"Without my family's support, I would not have the courage to continue"* (N). *"My father reminds me that memorization is our family's pride, and that inspires me"* (O).

Teacher encouragement

Teacher encouragement strengthened persistence through patient guidance and adaptive methods. Learners valued teachers who respected their needs and provided tailored strategies. Encouragement from teachers reinforced trust and motivation. Their patience and adaptability created inclusive learning environments that empowered learners to succeed.

Informant voices: *"My teacher always tells me that every small achievement matters, and this keeps me motivated"* (E). *"The teacher's patience makes me believe I can succeed"* (O). *"When my teacher adapts the method for me, I feel included and capable"* (P). *"My teacher's encouragement makes me feel that I am not different from others"* (Q).

Institutional facilities

Institutional facilities created inclusive environments that supported memorization. Accessible resources and supportive peers enhanced confidence and reduced stigma. Facilities such as audio recordings, braille Quran, and flexible schedules were particularly effective. These resources facilitated memorization and signaled institutional commitment to equity and inclusion.

Informant voices: *"The school gave me recordings and a quiet room, and it makes me feel respected"* (F). *"Having braille Quran helps me memorize independently"* (Q). *"The institution's facilities show me that I am valued as a student"* (R). *"Access to special resources makes me feel equal and motivated to continue"* (S).

These six themes demonstrate that motivation operates on multiple levels. Intrinsic drivers such as faith commitment, spiritual reward, and self-actualization provide inner strength, while extrinsic supports such as family encouragement, teacher guidance, and institutional facilities create external conditions for persistence. Together, they form a socio-religious force that empowers disabled learners to overcome barriers, achieve success in Quranic memorization, and affirm their dignity within Islamic education.

The findings of this study reveal six major motivational themes sustaining disabled learners in Quranic memorization: faith commitment, spiritual reward, self-actualization, family support, teacher encouragement, and institutional facilities. These themes illustrate how motivation functions as both an intrinsic psychological force and an extrinsic socio-religious support system. To situate these findings within broader scholarship, this discussion synthesizes them with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), expert perspectives on inclusive pedagogy, and prior studies on Quranic memorization and disability education.

Faith commitment emerged as the most fundamental intrinsic motivator. Learners consistently framed memorization as an act of devotion, aligning their persistence with religious obligation. This resonates with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the role of internalized values in sustaining motivation (Bhurawala, 2025; Vansteenkiste et al., 2018). In Self-Determination Theory, autonomy and relatedness are key drivers of intrinsic motivation. For disabled learners, faith commitment provided autonomy in the sense that memorization was chosen freely as worship, and relatedness in the sense that it connected them to Allah and the wider Muslim community.

Previous research supports this interpretation. Suwarno & Chasanah, (2021) found that children with special needs in disability boarding schools in Batam were motivated by religious devotion, which helped them persist despite cognitive and physical challenges. Similarly, Mala et al., (2024) observed that disabled learners in inclusive Islamic boarding schools viewed memorization as a spiritual duty, reinforcing their resilience. These findings confirm that faith commitment is not merely a cultural factor but a psychological anchor that sustains learning.

The second intrinsic motivator was spiritual reward. Learners believed that memorization would bring blessings in this life and the hereafter, providing continuous encouragement. This aligns with SDT's concept of internalization, where external values (reward from Allah) become integrated into the learner's identity. Spiritual reward thus functions as a hybrid motivator external in origin but internalized as part of the learner's worldview.

Expert opinion highlights the importance of spiritual reward in Islamic pedagogy. Syihabuddin, (2017) argue that inclusive education must integrate spiritual dimensions to ensure equity and dignity. For disabled learners, the anticipation of divine reward transforms memorization into a source of hope and perseverance. This is consistent with findings in broader religious education, where spiritual incentives sustain engagement even when material rewards are absent.

Self-actualization was the third intrinsic theme. Learners viewed their success in memorization as proof that disability did not limit intellectual or spiritual achievement. This finding resonates with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where self-actualization represents the highest level of psychological development. Self-Determination Theory also emphasizes competence as a driver of motivation; achieving milestones in memorization reinforced learners' sense of competence and dignity.

Julien, (2025) highlight that inclusive curricula must integrate opportunities for self-actualization, allowing disabled learners to affirm their identity as capable individuals. In Quranic memorization, self-actualization was achieved through completing surahs and receiving recognition from peers and teachers. This aligns with Utari et al., (2024), who argue that inclusive pedagogy must prioritize learners'

strengths rather than deficits. By affirming their capability, disabled learners challenged societal stigma and redefined their identity within Islamic education.

Family support was the most prominent extrinsic motivator. Parents and siblings provided emotional reinforcement, creating an environment of acceptance and confidence. This finding aligns with social-ecological models of learning, which emphasize the role of family in sustaining motivation.

Supporting families of exceptional learners is critical, as they often face emotional highs and lows in adjusting to disability (Morrison & Cosden, 1997). Families that provide consistent encouragement help learners develop resilience. In Quranic memorization, family involvement was expressed through listening to recitations, celebrating milestones, and reminding learners of the spiritual value of their efforts. This echoes findings by Fakhruddin et al., (2023), who observed that family support was decisive in sustaining disabled learners' persistence in tahfiz programs.

Teacher encouragement was another decisive extrinsic motivator. Teachers adapted methods, showed patience, and reinforced persistence through recognition of small achievements. This finding aligns with inclusive pedagogy, which emphasizes the role of teachers in creating supportive environments (Brennan et al., 2021).

Silva, (2025) found that teacher encouragement was critical in inclusive boarding schools, where adaptive strategies such as repetition and individualized pacing helped disabled learners succeed. Similarly, Trust, (2017) highlight that teachers must integrate justice and equality into their methods, ensuring that disabled learners feel respected. In this study, teacher encouragement reinforced trust and motivation, making learners feel included and capable. This confirms that teachers are not only facilitators of knowledge but also motivators who sustain persistence through empathy and adaptation.

Institutional facilities were the final extrinsic motivator. Accessible classrooms, braille Quran, audio recordings, and flexible schedules created inclusive environments that supported memorization. This finding aligns with the principle of equity in inclusive education, which requires institutions to provide resources that accommodate diverse needs.

Shaeffer, (2019) argue that inclusive education must address structural barriers to ensure social equality. Shpigelman et al., (2022) emphasize that facilities such as specialized resources and supportive peers reduce stigma and empower learners. In this study, institutional facilities not only facilitated memorization but also signaled institutional commitment to dignity and inclusion. Learners reported that such support gave them confidence to continue despite challenges, confirming that institutional equity is essential for sustaining motivation.

Synthesizing these six themes reveals that motivation operates on multiple levels. Intrinsic drivers such as faith commitment, spiritual reward, and self-actualization provide inner strength, while extrinsic supports such as family encouragement, teacher guidance, and institutional facilities create external conditions for persistence. Together, they form a socio-religious force that empowers disabled learners to overcome barriers and affirm their dignity within Islamic education.

This synthesis aligns with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the interaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in sustaining motivation. Faith commitment and spiritual reward reflect autonomy and relatedness,

self-actualization reflects competence, while family, teachers, and institutions provide external reinforcement that supports internalization. The findings also resonate with inclusive pedagogy, which prioritizes equity, dignity, and recognition of learners' strengths.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that disabled learners in Quranic memorization programs are sustained by a dynamic interplay of intrinsic motivations faith commitment, spiritual reward, and self-actualization and extrinsic supports family encouragement, teacher guidance, and institutional facilities. These findings directly answer the research questions by showing how motivation functions both as an internal drive and a socio-religious force that empowers learners to overcome barriers and affirm their dignity within Islamic education. The implications highlight the need for inclusive pedagogical strategies that integrate motivational drivers into curriculum design, teacher training, and institutional policy, ensuring that tahfiz programs remain accessible and equitable. The novelty of this article lies in bridging Self-Determination Theory with Islamic pedagogy, offering a fresh perspective on how psychological and socio-religious dimensions of motivation converge to sustain disabled learners in religious education, thereby filling a critical gap in the literature on inclusive Islamic schooling.

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Author contribution

Susan San Htay: data curation, writing-original draft preparation and editing, **Ei Thet Hmoo Po:** conceptualization, methodology, **Krim Ulwi:** validation, visualization, supervision, software.

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