

The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Improving Students' Qur'an Reading Ability at State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8 Banjarmasin

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in improving students' Qur'an reading ability and to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting this process at State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8, Banjarmasin. The study employed field research with a qualitative approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation and analyzed descriptively through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, supported by source triangulation. The findings indicate that the IRE teacher performs multiple interconnected roles as educator, guide, motivator, role model, learning facilitator, and evaluator. Qur'an reading improvement is supported by daily habituation, differentiated activities according to students' levels, short-surah review for lower grades, Qur'an reading practice for higher grades, and the use of the Ummi method. Student interest, motivation, concentration, and discipline support the program, whereas family circumstances and the surrounding environment remain important obstacles. The novelty lies in identifying a school-based model that integrates daily Qur'an-reading habituation, level-sensitive guidance, teacher motivation, and the Ummi method within a public elementary-school context in Banjarmasin.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, Qur'an Reading Ability, Teacher's Role

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan peran guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca Al-Qur'an siswa serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor pendukung dan penghambat yang memengaruhi proses tersebut di Sekolah Dasar Negeri Telaga Biru 8, Banjarmasin. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian lapangan (*field research*) dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan yang didukung oleh triangulasi sumber. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru PAI menjalankan berbagai peran yang saling berkaitan sebagai pendidik, pembimbing, motivator, teladan, fasilitator pembelajaran, dan evaluator. Peningkatan kemampuan membaca Al-Qur'an didukung oleh pembiasaan membaca Al-Qur'an setiap hari, kegiatan pembelajaran yang disesuaikan dengan tingkat kemampuan siswa, pengulangan surah-surah pendek bagi siswa kelas rendah, latihan membaca Al-Qur'an bagi siswa kelas tinggi, serta penggunaan metode Ummi. Minat, motivasi, konsentrasi, dan kedisiplinan siswa menjadi faktor pendukung dalam pelaksanaan program, sedangkan kondisi

keluarga dan lingkungan sekitar masih menjadi faktor penghambat yang penting. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada identifikasi model pembelajaran berbasis sekolah yang mengintegrasikan pembiasaan membaca Al-Qur'an secara rutin, bimbingan yang disesuaikan dengan tingkat kemampuan siswa, motivasi guru, dan penggunaan metode Ummi dalam konteks sekolah dasar negeri di Banjarmasin.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Agama Islam, Kemampuan Membaca Al-Qur'an, Peran Guru

INTRODUCTION

The ability to read the Qur'an is a fundamental component of Islamic religious education because reading constitutes an important gateway through which students encounter the Qur'an as a source of religious guidance. At the elementary-school level, this competence is particularly significant because students are still developing basic literacy skills, pronunciation habits, concentration, and learning discipline. Qur'an reading education therefore cannot be reduced to the mechanical recognition of Arabic letters but should involve accuracy, fluency, makhārij al-ḥurūf, and basic tajwīd. Previous studies have shown that students' Qur'an reading difficulties remain an educational concern even when Qur'an-related activities have been incorporated into formal schooling. Teachers consequently need to provide structured guidance that responds to differences in students' abilities. Such an orientation is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of teacher intervention in developing students' Qur'an reading competence (Mahdali, 2020; Sari et al., 2020; Amanulloh & Budiyo, 2023).

The position of Qur'an reading within Islamic education is also connected to the broader objectives of religious education, which seek to develop students' knowledge, attitudes, practices, and religious character. Reading the Qur'an accurately provides students with an initial foundation for engaging with Islamic teachings and religious practices. When students experience difficulties at the reading stage, their access to subsequent Qur'anic learning may also become more complicated. This relationship makes the teaching of Qur'an reading a pedagogical responsibility rather than merely an additional religious activity. Studies of Qur'an literacy have demonstrated that the quality of early reading instruction can influence students' motivation and willingness to engage with the Qur'an more regularly. Consequently, elementary schools require instructional practices that combine technical reading competence with positive learning experiences (Mahdali, 2020; Rosi, 2021; Zanjabila et al., 2023).

The teacher occupies a central position in this process because students at the elementary level require direct modeling and repeated practice. A teacher does not merely explain tajwīd rules but demonstrates correct pronunciation, listens to students' reading, identifies errors, and provides immediate correction. The teacher also creates the emotional conditions necessary for students to feel comfortable when making mistakes during reading practice. Research on Islamic Religious Education teachers has identified motivation, guidance, evaluation, and direct assistance as important dimensions of the teacher's role in overcoming students' Qur'an learning difficulties. These functions become particularly important for students who have not developed sufficient reading competence at home. Thus, the teacher becomes an important mediator between curricular expectations and students' actual Qur'an reading abilities (Rusdi et al., 2022; Darmasari & Wahab, 2023).

The role of the teacher is increasingly complex in public elementary schools because students enter the classroom with diverse religious and literacy backgrounds. Some students may already attend Qur'an learning institutions outside school, while

others depend heavily on the school for basic Qur'an instruction. Such differences produce heterogeneous learning needs within the same classroom. The teacher must therefore adapt instruction without marginalizing students who need more intensive assistance. Research conducted in elementary and madrasah settings similarly indicates that students' reading abilities can vary substantially, requiring teachers to use differentiated guidance and repeated practice. This makes teacher sensitivity toward individual differences a crucial element in Qur'an literacy instruction (Nardawati, 2021; Rusdi et al., 2022; Darmasari & Wahab, 2023).

Another important dimension is habituation. Qur'an reading competence is unlikely to develop optimally when students encounter reading practice only during limited instructional periods. Regular exposure creates opportunities for repetition, pronunciation correction, confidence building, and gradual internalization of reading habits. Research on Qur'an literacy programs has found that scheduled reading activities before formal lessons can create a routine that encourages students to interact with the Qur'an consistently. Such routines also provide teachers with repeated opportunities to monitor students' progress. Therefore, habituation can function simultaneously as an instructional strategy, a motivational mechanism, and a form of religious character formation (Reisa et al., 2022; Ramadani et al., 2024).

The importance of habituation is particularly evident in the context of State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8. According to the research source, students in Grades III–VI engage in Qur'an reading before the learning process begins, while Grades I–II focus on reviewing memorized short surahs. The school also conducts religious routines involving short-surah recitation and Asmaul Husna on specified school days. These activities indicate that Qur'an learning is embedded within the broader school culture rather than being confined exclusively to formal PAI lessons. Such institutionalization provides a recurring learning context for students who require regular practice. The findings correspond with studies showing that consistent Qur'an literacy routines can increase students' familiarity and participation in Qur'an learning (Noorhasanah, 2026; Reisa et al., 2022; Ramadani et al., 2024).

The use of instructional methods is another issue that deserves attention. Qur'an reading requires methodological precision because students must connect visual symbols with accurate Arabic pronunciation and reading rules. Methods that provide gradual sequencing, modeling, repetition, and correction can help students develop these skills more systematically. The Ummi method, for example, emphasizes structured stages of Qur'an learning and teacher modeling, and previous research has reported positive outcomes in students' reading performance. Other approaches such as talaqqi, drilling, and tahsin also emphasize direct teacher-student interaction and repeated practice. Consequently, selecting a method should consider both instructional objectives and the characteristics of learners (A'yun & Romadlon, 2022; Kuncoro, 2022; Khotimah, 2021).

The Ummi method is particularly relevant to the present study because the PAI teacher at State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8 reported using the method through its rhythmic and melodic features. The teacher begins with basic materials appropriate to students' level, including recognition of hijā'iyah letters for beginning learners. Such an approach reflects the principle that Qur'an reading instruction should proceed from basic recognition toward more complex reading competence. Research on the Ummi method has indicated that structured implementation can help students improve pronunciation, reading fluency, and interest in Qur'an learning. The method therefore provides an

important dimension for interpreting the instructional practices found in the present study (Noorhasanah, 2026; A'yun & Romadlon, 2022; Kuncoro, 2022).

Teacher motivation is also essential because Qur'an reading can become difficult for students who repeatedly experience errors or slow progress. Students who perceive themselves as weak readers may develop reluctance, embarrassment, or avoidance behaviors. In this situation, the teacher's encouragement can help students maintain participation and develop confidence. Research on Qur'an reading instruction demonstrates that motivation is frequently associated with teacher guidance, positive reinforcement, and meaningful learning routines. The teacher's motivational role therefore needs to accompany technical instruction rather than being treated as a separate activity (Reisa et al., 2022; Darmasari & Wahab, 2023; Selian & Silahuddin, 2024).

The family environment represents another important dimension of Qur'an literacy development. Formal school instruction cannot completely replace the role of parents in providing additional practice and reinforcement at home. When parents have limited time, limited Qur'an reading competence, or insufficient awareness of the importance of home practice, students may receive less reinforcement outside school. Research concerning Qur'an literacy has emphasized that parental involvement can contribute to children's familiarity with the Qur'an and their motivation to learn. Therefore, the effectiveness of school-based Qur'an instruction should be understood within the interaction between school and family environments (Nurluthfyani, 2023; Inten & Agustina, 2022; Rusdi et al., 2022).

The surrounding social environment can similarly influence students' opportunities to develop Qur'an literacy. Students do not learn only from formal lessons but also from the practices, expectations, and habits of the communities in which they live. Where Qur'an learning is strongly supported by families, religious institutions, and communities, students may have more opportunities for continued practice. Conversely, when school becomes the principal location for Qur'an learning, the teacher carries a greater instructional burden. This contextual dimension is relevant to public elementary schools that serve students from diverse social backgrounds. Studies of Qur'an literacy repeatedly identify environmental and family factors as variables that can support or constrain students' learning progress (Syaifullah et al., 2022; Nurluthfyani, 2023; Rusdi et al., 2022).

Student concentration and discipline are also closely connected to Qur'an reading development. Reading the Qur'an requires students to attend carefully to letters, vowels, pronunciation points, and reading rules. Students who are easily distracted may find it difficult to maintain accuracy during repeated reading practice. The research at State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8 indicates that the PAI teacher monitors students while they read and checks their progress individually. This practice illustrates how classroom management and monitoring become part of Qur'an instruction. Similar studies emphasize that teacher monitoring and repeated individual practice are useful for identifying and addressing reading difficulties (Noorhasanah, 2026; Syaifullah et al., 2022; Darmasari & Wahab, 2023).

The issue of Qur'an reading competence also needs to be positioned within the contemporary development of Islamic education. Modern educational environments increasingly emphasize student-centered learning, differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and meaningful learning experiences. Nevertheless, Qur'an reading retains specific technical requirements that cannot be separated from direct demonstration and correction. Therefore, innovation in Qur'an education should not eliminate traditional

elements such as talaqqi, repetition, teacher modeling, and oral evaluation. Instead, these elements can be integrated with contemporary pedagogical principles that recognize students' differences and learning needs. This integrative perspective is supported by research on Qur'an reading methods and teacher roles (Khotimah, 2021; A'yun & Romadlon, 2022; Zanjabila et al., 2023).

Previous research has generally examined the role of PAI teachers in improving Qur'an reading ability in particular schools, madrasahs, or Islamic educational institutions. Several studies have emphasized teacher motivation, while others have focused on methods such as Ummi, talaqqi, tahsin, or drilling. Other research has highlighted parental support, learning environment, and student motivation as important factors. However, fewer studies have described how these dimensions operate simultaneously within a public elementary school in Banjarmasin. The present study therefore seeks to describe the teacher's role as a combination of educational guidance, habituation, motivation, methodological implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This contextual emphasis distinguishes the study from research that concentrates primarily on one instructional method (Sari et al., 2020; Rusdi et al., 2022; Amanulloh & Budiyo, 2023).

The empirical setting is State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8, located in Telaga Biru, West Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. The school was established in 1975 under the earlier name SDN Bina Raga and changed its name to SDN Telaga Biru 8 in 1995. In the 2025/2026 academic year, the school had 149 students distributed across six classes and one PAI teacher, Norlatipah, S.Pd. The school's educational vision emphasizes not only academic intelligence but also health, honesty, creativity, and strong character. This context provides a meaningful setting for examining how Qur'an literacy is developed within a general public elementary-school environment (Noorhasanah, 2026; Amanulloh & Budiyo, 2023).

The empirical problem underlying this study concerns the continuing variation in students' Qur'an reading abilities and the need for sustained teacher intervention. The research source indicates that the school does not treat Qur'an reading as an isolated classroom topic but integrates it into daily school routines. The teacher provides different activities according to students' developmental levels and uses the Ummi method as part of Qur'an instruction. At the same time, the teacher encounters constraints arising from family circumstances and the students' surrounding environment. These findings indicate that improving Qur'an reading ability is a multidimensional educational process involving pedagogy, habituation, motivation, discipline, family support, and school culture (Noorhasanah, 2026; Reisa et al., 2022; Syaifullah et al., 2022). Based on this context, the study aims to describe the role of the Islamic Religious Education teacher in improving students' Qur'an reading ability at State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8, Banjarmasin. It also aims to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of this role. The study focuses on the teacher's educational, guiding, motivational, exemplary, methodological, and evaluative functions. By examining these functions in one public elementary-school context, the study seeks to contribute empirical evidence concerning Qur'an literacy practices outside specialized Islamic schools or Qur'an education institutions. Its contribution lies particularly in explaining how daily habituation and level-sensitive instruction are integrated with teacher motivation and the Ummi method in a public-school setting (Noorhasanah, 2026; Amanulloh & Budiyo, 2023; Zanjabila et al., 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers

The concept of teacher role in Islamic education includes a set of professional responsibilities directed toward students' intellectual, religious, moral, and behavioral development. In Qur'an education, these responsibilities become more specific because students need both conceptual explanations and direct demonstrations of correct reading. A PAI teacher is therefore not simply a transmitter of information but also a model of religious practice. The teacher observes students' performance, identifies difficulties, provides guidance, motivates participation, and evaluates progress. Research in Qur'an literacy consistently describes these functions as interconnected rather than independent. Rusdi et al. (2022), for example, identify the teacher as motivator, guide, and evaluator in addressing students' Qur'an reading and writing difficulties.

The teacher as educator has the responsibility to create an instructional environment in which students can develop knowledge and skills gradually. In Qur'an learning, educational responsibility involves introducing hijā'iyyah letters, pronunciation, vowels, tajwīd, and fluency according to students' levels. This responsibility requires teachers to understand the sequence of learning rather than merely ask students to read independently. Studies conducted in elementary contexts show that students may enter the classroom with substantially different levels of Qur'an literacy. Therefore, educational planning needs to accommodate students who are beginning to recognize letters as well as those who can already read connected verses. This principle is evident in studies by Darmasari and Wahab (2023) and Amanulloh and Budiyo (2023).

The teacher as guide is particularly important because Qur'an reading is a performance-based competence. Students need immediate feedback when they mispronounce letters, confuse vowels, or apply tajwīd incorrectly. Direct guidance enables teachers to demonstrate the correct form and then allow students to reproduce it. Research at MI Ma'had Ilamy Palembang found that the teacher's guiding role was accompanied by repeated reading through talaqqi to overcome students' difficulties. Such findings indicate that Qur'an reading competence develops through interaction rather than through explanation alone. Consequently, individual guidance constitutes an important pedagogical component of Qur'an literacy (Rusdi et al., 2022).

The teacher also functions as a motivator. Motivation is important because reading the Qur'an requires persistence, especially when students have difficulty with Arabic letters or pronunciation. Students who experience repeated errors may lose confidence unless the teacher creates a supportive environment. Positive encouragement can help students perceive mistakes as part of learning rather than as evidence of failure. Research on PAI teachers indicates that motivation can be integrated into routine Qur'an reading activities through encouragement, guidance, and positive reinforcement. Reisa et al. (2022) similarly found that teachers' direct involvement in Qur'an literacy activities can foster students' enthusiasm for participating in regular reading and writing activities.

Teacher modeling represents another important dimension of Qur'an education. Students at elementary-school age often learn pronunciation through imitation before they fully understand the theoretical rules underlying the pronunciation. The teacher's own recitation therefore becomes an instructional resource. Correct pronunciation, rhythm, articulation, and reading behavior can be demonstrated before students practice independently. Research on teacher modeling in Qur'an recitation emphasizes that direct demonstration can assist students in applying tajwīd principles during actual reading. This

perspective reinforces the importance of the teacher as a living model within Qur'an learning (Hermawan & Asnawi, 2023).

The teacher's role as evaluator is equally significant because Qur'an reading improvement requires continuous assessment. Evaluation can reveal whether students have mastered specific letters, reading patterns, pronunciation points, or tajwīd rules. In a qualitative instructional environment, evaluation may occur through direct listening, individual reading, questioning, and observation of student progress. Rusdi et al. (2022) identify evaluation as one of the principal teacher functions in Qur'an reading and writing instruction. The assessment process also provides information for determining whether students require additional guidance or more intensive practice.

Qur'an Reading Ability

Qur'an reading ability refers not merely to the capacity to recognize Arabic script but also to the ability to pronounce Qur'anic text accurately and fluently. Relevant dimensions include recognition of hijā'iyah letters, correct articulation, vowel recognition, reading continuity, and application of basic tajwīd. Mahdali (2020) emphasizes that Qur'an reading competence can be understood within a broader social and educational context because reading ability develops through interaction between individual learners and their learning environments. Therefore, Qur'an literacy should be conceptualized as both an individual competence and a socially supported learning process. This broader understanding is useful for interpreting elementary-school Qur'an education.

Tajwīd constitutes a fundamental component of accurate Qur'an reading. Students need to understand and practice rules concerning pronunciation, elongation, pauses, assimilation, and other aspects of Qur'anic recitation. However, theoretical mastery of tajwīd does not automatically guarantee correct application during reading. Students require repeated opportunities to hear, imitate, practice, and receive correction. Research on Qur'an reading instruction has consequently emphasized the integration of explanation and direct practice. Syaifullah et al. (2022) demonstrate that teacher strategies directed toward tajwīd competence need to address both students' existing abilities and their learning motivation.

Makhārij al-ḥurūf is also fundamental because the incorrect articulation of Arabic letters may affect the accuracy of Qur'anic recitation. Beginning learners often require repeated exposure to the visual and phonetic characteristics of letters. Teachers can support this process by pronouncing letters clearly, asking students to repeat them, and correcting articulation individually. Darmasari and Wahab (2023) reported the use of repeated hijā'iyah-letter practice as part of teacher efforts to improve students' reading ability. This practice is especially relevant for lower-grade students who have not yet developed sufficient familiarity with Arabic orthography.

Fluency is another indicator of Qur'an reading development. A student may recognize letters correctly but still read slowly because of limited practice or uncertainty regarding vowels and word combinations. Fluency therefore develops progressively through repeated reading and structured exposure to increasingly complex texts. The Ummi method has been reported to support reading development through systematic learning stages and repeated practice. A'yun and Romadlon (2022) found that implementation of the Ummi method in an elementary Islamic school was associated with improvements in students' Qur'an reading quality and fluency. This finding provides a

relevant theoretical basis for understanding the use of Ummi at State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8.

Qur'an reading also has an affective dimension. Students who enjoy reading are more likely to practice regularly, while students who experience reading as difficult or threatening may avoid participation. Motivation therefore interacts with competence in a reciprocal process. Improved ability may strengthen confidence, while positive motivation may encourage greater practice. Research on Qur'an learning has documented the relationship between teacher support, student motivation, and willingness to participate in Qur'an reading activities (Reisa et al., 2022; Ramli & Gunawan, 2022). This suggests that technical instruction should be accompanied by motivational support.

Qur'an Learning Methods

The Ummi method is one of the approaches relevant to Qur'an reading instruction in the present study. Its instructional characteristics include systematic stages, teacher modeling, repetition, and attention to reading accuracy. In elementary education, such characteristics can provide structure for students who require predictable learning sequences. A'yun and Romadlon (2022) reported that the Ummi method was implemented through stages established by the Ummi Foundation and was associated with improved Qur'an reading outcomes. Kuncoro (2022) likewise reported positive development in Qur'an reading and memorization following the implementation of the Ummi method at SD Muhammadiyah Wirobrajan II.

Talaqqi is another relevant method because it emphasizes direct transmission and correction between teacher and learner. In Qur'an education, students read or recite directly before the teacher, who listens and corrects errors. The process allows the teacher to detect pronunciation problems that may not be visible through written assignments. Rusdi et al. (2022) found repeated reading through talaqqi useful for addressing students' Qur'an reading and writing difficulties. The method therefore complements other structured approaches by maintaining direct oral interaction between teacher and student.

Drilling and habituation are also important because Qur'an reading involves motor, visual, auditory, and phonological coordination. Repetition provides students with opportunities to consolidate patterns that initially require conscious attention. Khotimah (2021) found that drilling and habituation could be used to support Qur'an reading among elementary-level learners. Such approaches are compatible with school routines in which students read repeatedly before formal lessons. The value of repetition, however, depends on whether teachers monitor accuracy rather than simply encourage students to read large quantities of text.

Tahsin represents a further dimension of Qur'an reading education because it focuses on improving the quality of recitation. Students are expected not only to finish reading passages but also to improve articulation and adherence to tajwīd principles. Tahsin-oriented instruction is therefore consistent with the principle that quality should be prioritized alongside quantity. Research involving Qur'an learning through tahsin has reported improvements in students' understanding of tajwīd and their motivation to improve their reading. Ramli and Gunawan (2022) demonstrate that tahsin-based activities can help learners understand reading rules and become more motivated to improve their recitation.

The effectiveness of any method depends partly on teacher competence. A method cannot function as an automatic solution when teachers do not understand its principles or fail to adapt it to students' needs. Research on PAI teacher competence emphasizes the

importance of pedagogical knowledge, appropriate learning strategies, and continuous monitoring. Amanulloh and Budiyono (2023) argue that teacher competence in curriculum and instructional implementation is relevant to students' Qur'an reading development. More recent research also identifies pedagogical competence as important for lesson planning, method selection, classroom management, and learning-media utilization (Al-Ghifaari et al., 2026).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Student interest is a significant supporting factor in Qur'an reading development. Students who are interested in Qur'an reading are more likely to participate actively and practice consistently. Interest can also strengthen students' willingness to overcome difficulties because they perceive the activity as meaningful. The study at State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8 found that many students were already interested in reading the Qur'an and participated in regular reading activities. Similar findings have been reported in research concerning elementary Qur'an literacy, where teacher encouragement and meaningful routines contribute to student participation (Noorhasanah, 2026; Ramadani et al., 2024).

Motivation functions as another supporting factor. Motivation may originate from students themselves, teachers, parents, or the broader religious environment. In the school under study, the teacher develops motivation through daily reading routines and encouragement. This approach is consistent with research showing that teacher involvement is particularly important for students who have difficulty maintaining interest in Qur'an reading. Reisa et al. (2022) found that teacher-guided Qur'an reading and writing activities could generate student enthusiasm, while Darmasari and Wahab (2023) emphasized the teacher's motivational efforts when teaching beginning readers.

Concentration is necessary for accurate Qur'an reading because students must attend carefully to letters, vowels, pronunciation, and tajwīd. Distraction may cause students to omit letters, misread vowels, or apply reading rules inconsistently. The research source indicates that the PAI teacher monitors students while they read and moves around the classroom to maintain attention. Such monitoring allows the teacher to identify students who need immediate assistance. This finding corresponds with literature emphasizing active teacher supervision in Qur'an learning (Noorhasanah, 2026; Syaifullah et al., 2022).

Discipline provides the behavioral foundation for repeated Qur'an learning. Regular reading requires students to participate according to scheduled routines and to maintain continuity even when progress is gradual. At State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8, the teacher monitors individual students and asks them about the progress of their reading. Such practices combine academic monitoring with behavioral discipline. The relationship between discipline and religious learning is also consistent with broader Islamic education research emphasizing habituation as a means of developing stable learning behavior (Noorhasanah, 2026; Siroz, 2024).

Family support constitutes a major external factor. Parents can reinforce school instruction by encouraging children to read the Qur'an, providing appropriate learning materials, and supervising practice at home. When parents are unable to provide this support because of work or other responsibilities, students may have fewer opportunities to practice. Research on Qur'an literacy among children confirms the importance of parental involvement and modeling. Nurluthfyani (2023) found that parents can function

as models, guides, and providers of moral and material support for children's Qur'an literacy activities.

The environment can likewise influence the sustainability of Qur'an literacy. Students who live in environments where Qur'an reading is common may encounter additional opportunities for practice and reinforcement. Conversely, students who receive little religious learning outside school may depend heavily on the teacher. The research at State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8 specifically identifies environmental conditions as an inhibiting factor, particularly among some younger students. Similar studies have emphasized that school, family, and community contexts interact in shaping students' Qur'an learning experiences (Rusdi et al., 2022; Syaifullah et al., 2022). The literature therefore suggests that improving Qur'an reading ability requires an integrated model rather than reliance on one factor. Teacher competence, learning method, student motivation, habituation, assessment, family involvement, and environmental support operate in combination. This integrated perspective is consistent with studies showing that Qur'an reading improvement emerges from interactions among pedagogical, motivational, and contextual variables. The present study adopts this perspective to interpret the empirical findings from State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8. Its emphasis is not on measuring one method's effectiveness statistically but on understanding how multiple teacher practices function together in a particular school context (Amanulloh & Budiyo, 2023; Zanjabila et al., 2023; Selian & Silahuddin, 2024).

METHOD

This study employed field research with a qualitative approach. Field research was selected because the research sought to understand the role of the Islamic Religious Education teacher directly within the natural educational setting of State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8, West Banjarmasin. The qualitative orientation allowed the researcher to describe actions, experiences, interactions, and contextual factors without reducing them to numerical variables. The study focused on the teacher's role in improving Qur'an reading ability and the factors that supported or inhibited this role. Similar qualitative designs have been widely used in recent studies of Qur'an reading instruction because teacher practices and student experiences require contextual interpretation (Rusdi et al., 2022; Darmasari & Wahab, 2023; Amanulloh & Budiyo, 2023).

The research location was State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8, located on Jalan Intan, Telaga Biru, West Banjarmasin, Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan. The research subjects included school personnel and students, while the primary focus was the PAI teacher's role in improving Qur'an reading ability. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to examine the implementation of Qur'an reading activities, interviews were conducted with relevant informants including the principal, PAI teacher, and students, and documentation was used to obtain supporting information concerning school conditions and learning activities. The use of multiple data-collection techniques is consistent with recent qualitative research on Qur'an literacy (Rusdi et al., 2022; Reisa et al., 2022).

The data analysis followed a qualitative descriptive process involving data reduction, data organization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Information obtained through observation, interviews, and documents was compared to identify recurring patterns related to teacher roles, learning methods, habituation, motivation, and supporting or inhibiting factors. Source triangulation was used to strengthen the

credibility of the findings by comparing information from different participants and data sources. The research source also describes member checking as part of the research process, allowing information to be confirmed with informants. Such procedures are consistent with qualitative research practices used in recent Qur'an education studies (Susanto & Jailani, 2023; Rusdi et al., 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Setting and Empirical Context

State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8 is a public elementary school located in Telaga Biru, West Banjarmasin, Banjarmasin City. The school was initially established in 1975 as SDN Bina Raga and later changed its name to SDN Telaga Biru 8 in 1995. The school is accredited B and serves students from Grades I to VI. During the 2025/2026 academic year, the school had 149 students distributed across six classes. This context is relevant because the school provides Islamic religious instruction within a general public elementary-school environment rather than a specialized Islamic school (Noorhasanah, 2026; Amanulloh & Budiyo, 2023).

The school had one PAI teacher, Norlatipah, S.Pd., during the period of the study. The school's educational vision emphasizes academic development together with health, honesty, creativity, and strong character. This orientation provides an institutional basis for integrating Qur'an learning with character formation. The Qur'an reading program therefore operates within a wider educational environment rather than as an isolated technical activity. Similar research has emphasized that school culture can strengthen the sustainability of religious literacy activities (Noorhasanah, 2026; Ramadani et al., 2024).

The school implements regular religious activities as part of its daily and weekly routines. According to the research data, students in Grades III–VI read the Qur'an before classroom learning begins, while students in Grades I–II review memorized short surahs. From Tuesday to Thursday, students also participate in short-surah recitation and Asmaul Husna before lessons. These activities establish repeated contact with Qur'anic texts and religious practices. Research on Qur'an literacy routines similarly indicates that regular pre-learning activities can encourage students' participation and strengthen religious habits (Noorhasanah, 2026; Reisa et al., 2022).

The differentiation between lower and higher grades demonstrates that Qur'an instruction is adjusted to students' developmental and reading levels. Younger students who have not yet developed sufficient reading ability focus on short-surah review, whereas older students engage in direct Qur'an reading. This differentiation prevents the school from imposing exactly the same task on all learners. It also reflects the pedagogical principle that instruction should correspond to students' existing competence. Similar differentiation has been identified as useful in studies of beginning Qur'an readers (Darmasari & Wahab, 2023; Ridwan & Fanny, 2023).

The teacher's role begins with creating opportunities for students to interact with the Qur'an consistently. The research data indicate that the PAI teacher does not wait for formal PAI lessons before introducing Qur'an reading. Instead, reading is incorporated into the beginning of the school day. This practice increases the frequency of student exposure to Qur'anic text. It also creates a predictable routine through which Qur'an reading becomes part of ordinary school life (Noorhasanah, 2026; Reisa et al., 2022).

Teacher as Educator and Guide

The PAI teacher functions as an educator by introducing students to the basic elements required for Qur'an reading. These include recognition of hijā'iyah letters, pronunciation, reading sequences, and tajwīd. The research data indicate that the teacher pays attention to students who are still experiencing difficulties in basic reading. This means that instruction is not restricted to students who have already mastered the basic skills. Such an approach corresponds with research emphasizing teacher responsibility in overcoming early Qur'an literacy difficulties (Rusdi et al., 2022; Darmasari & Wahab, 2023).

The teacher also functions as a guide by directly assisting students during reading practice. Observation and interview data indicate that the teacher monitors students while they read and checks their progress individually. Such monitoring enables the teacher to identify students who are struggling with specific reading components. Direct intervention is especially important in Qur'an education because pronunciation errors can persist if they are not corrected immediately. Research on talaqqi and teacher-guided reading similarly emphasizes the importance of direct feedback (Rusdi et al., 2022; Hermawan & Asnawi, 2023).

The teacher's guidance is also visible in the use of gradual learning activities. Beginning students are introduced to hijā'iyah letters and basic reading, while more advanced students are encouraged to read Qur'anic passages. This indicates that the teacher does not treat the class as a homogeneous group. Instead, learning is adjusted according to students' existing levels of competence. Such level-sensitive instruction is consistent with recent studies on Qur'an reading programs that employ ability-based grouping and gradual progression (Ridwan & Fanny, 2023; Darmasari & Wahab, 2023).

Another important finding concerns teacher modeling. The PAI teacher demonstrates correct reading and uses the Ummi method with its characteristic rhythmic and melodic features. Students then imitate the teacher's reading. This practice allows students to receive auditory and visual models simultaneously. Teacher modeling is particularly relevant in Qur'an education because students need to hear correct pronunciation before they can reproduce it accurately (Noorhasanah, 2026; Hermawan & Asnawi, 2023).

Teacher as Motivator

The PAI teacher also functions as a motivator by encouraging students to read the Qur'an regularly. Motivation is particularly important for students who experience difficulty in recognizing letters or maintaining reading fluency. The research data indicate that the teacher encourages students to develop regular reading habits. Students interviewed in the study expressed positive feelings toward Qur'an reading and demonstrated personal aspirations related to Qur'an learning. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing the relationship between teacher encouragement and students' willingness to participate in Qur'an literacy activities (Noorhasanah, 2026; Reisa et al., 2022).

Positive student responses suggest that motivation is not merely expressed verbally but is embedded in the learning routine. Students become familiar with the expectation that Qur'an reading occurs before formal learning begins. Such routine reduces the possibility that Qur'an reading will be perceived as an occasional or optional activity. At the same time, teacher encouragement helps students associate Qur'an learning with positive educational experiences. Research on elementary Qur'an learning

has similarly reported that engaging instructional practices can strengthen students' interest and participation (Ramadani et al., 2024; A'yun & Romadlon, 2022).

The teacher's motivational role is also connected to students' confidence. Students who are still developing reading ability need a learning environment in which mistakes can be corrected without creating excessive embarrassment. Individual guidance and repeated practice can gradually strengthen confidence. This is consistent with research showing that supportive teacher-student relationships are important in overcoming Qur'an reading difficulties. Motivation thus functions as a bridge between students' current ability and their willingness to continue learning (Rusdi et al., 2022; Darmasari & Wahab, 2023).

Learning Method and Evaluation

The main method identified in the study is the Ummi method. The PAI teacher reported using the method through its characteristic rhythms and songs, beginning with basic reading material such as hijā'iyah letters for beginning students. The method is therefore used as a structured framework rather than merely as a label attached to ordinary reading practice. Research on Ummi learning in elementary schools has reported positive outcomes when the method is implemented according to systematic learning stages. A'yun and Romadlon (2022) found that the Ummi method contributed to improved Qur'an reading quality, while Kuncoro (2022) reported improvements in reading and memorization at SD Muhammadiyah Wirobrajan II.

The implementation of Ummi in the present study also reflects the importance of repetition. Students need to encounter the same reading patterns repeatedly until recognition and pronunciation become more stable. Repetition is especially important for students who are still developing basic Arabic literacy. Research on drilling and habituation similarly indicates that repeated practice can support students' Qur'an reading development. However, repetition becomes pedagogically meaningful when it is accompanied by teacher monitoring and correction (Khotimah, 2021; Syaifullah et al., 2022).

Evaluation occurs through direct observation and questioning during the reading process. The teacher monitors students and asks them about the progress of the verses they are reading. This informal formative assessment allows the teacher to identify students who need further guidance. Although the study does not report a standardized numerical Qur'an reading assessment, the observed monitoring functions as an ongoing form of classroom evaluation. This approach is consistent with research that positions teacher observation and direct reading performance as important components of Qur'an learning assessment (Rusdi et al., 2022; Selian & Silahuddin, 2024).

The findings also indicate that the school prioritizes continuity over isolated instructional events. Students read regularly, receive teacher guidance, and are encouraged to maintain their practice. This combination creates a learning cycle consisting of exposure, practice, monitoring, correction, and repetition. Such a cycle is compatible with research on Qur'an literacy programs that emphasize systematic practice and continuous teacher supervision. Therefore, the principal contribution of the observed instructional process lies not in a single technique but in the integration of several complementary practices (A'yun & Romadlon, 2022; Zanjabila et al., 2023).



Dimension	Empirical Finding at State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8	Educational Interpretation	Relevant Literature
Teacher as educator	Teacher introduces hijā'iyah letters, Qur'an reading, and tajwīd	Provides foundational literacy instruction	Rusdi et al. (2022); Darmasari & Wahab (2023)
Teacher as guide	Direct guidance and correction during reading	Addresses individual reading difficulties	Rusdi et al. (2022)
Teacher as motivator	Encouragement to read regularly	Strengthens participation and confidence	Reisa et al. (2022); Ramadani et al. (2024)
Teacher as role model	Teacher demonstrates correct recitation	Supports imitation and pronunciation accuracy	Hermawan & Asnawi (2023)
Habituation	Qur'an reading before lessons	Creates regular Qur'an literacy practice	Reisa et al. (2022)
Differentiated practice	Grades I–II review short surahs; Grades III–VI read Qur'an	Adjusts activities to students' levels	Darmasari & Wahab (2023); Ridwan & Fanny (2023)
Learning method	Umami method with rhythm and songs	Provides structured and engaging learning	A'yun & Romadlon (2022); Kuncoro (2022)
Monitoring	Teacher observes and checks students individually	Provides formative feedback	Syaifullah et al. (2022)
Supporting factors	Interest, motivation, concentration, discipline	Strengthens learning continuity	Noorhasanah (2026); Ramadani et al. (2024)
Inhibiting factors	Family and environmental conditions	Limits reinforcement outside school	Rusdi et al. (2022); Nurluthfyani (2023)

A central finding of the study is that the teacher's role operates through several interconnected functions rather than a single instructional responsibility. The PAI teacher acts as educator, guide, motivator, role model, facilitator, and evaluator. This finding is consistent with previous qualitative research showing that teachers addressing Qur'an reading difficulties must provide both instructional and affective support. Rusdi et al. (2022) specifically identify motivation, guidance, and evaluation as major teacher functions. The present study extends this understanding by demonstrating how these functions operate within a public elementary school through a regular school-based routine.

An important dimension of the instructional practice is the centrality of habituation. Qur'an reading is conducted before the formal learning process, which provides students with repeated exposure to Qur'anic text. Habituation is pedagogically

significant because reading competence requires practice over time rather than one-time explanation. Reisa et al. (2022) reported a similar 15-minute Qur'an literacy routine before lessons in another school context. The finding at Telaga Biru 8 therefore reinforces the view that integrating Qur'an reading into the school schedule can create a sustainable literacy environment.

The instructional process also reflects differentiated learning across grade levels. Students in Grades I and II engage in short-surah review, while students in Grades III–VI engage in Qur'an reading. This differentiation recognizes that beginning readers cannot necessarily be expected to perform the same tasks as more advanced readers. Research on Qur'an learning similarly recommends attention to students' initial ability and gradual progression. Darmasari and Wahab (2023) reported differences in students' reading abilities even within the same elementary-school environment. The present finding indicates that differentiation can be implemented through relatively simple adjustments to daily school routines.

Another notable aspect of the instructional practice is the use of the Ummi method. The teacher's use of rhythm and song provides an instructional variation that can make Qur'an reading more accessible to elementary learners. Previous studies have found that the Ummi method can contribute to improved reading quality when implemented systematically. A'yun and Romadlon (2022) reported positive effects on Qur'an reading ability following Ummi implementation in an Islamic elementary school. Kuncoro (2022) likewise found that Ummi learning could support improvements in students' reading and memorization. The present study confirms the relevance of this method while demonstrating its use within a public elementary-school setting.

The findings further demonstrate that teacher monitoring remains necessary even when a structured instructional method is employed. A method does not automatically guarantee learning success because students continue to differ in pronunciation, concentration, motivation, and prior experience. The PAI teacher therefore observes students while they read and checks their progress. This practice ensures that errors can be identified rather than remaining unnoticed. Syaifullah et al. (2022) similarly emphasize the importance of teacher strategies, motivation, and individual assistance in improving Qur'an reading and tajwīd competence.

Teacher motivation constitutes another significant component of the learning process. The research data show that the teacher encourages students to become more diligent in reading the Qur'an. This function is important because students' learning behavior depends partly on whether they perceive Qur'an reading as meaningful and manageable. Reisa et al. (2022) found that teacher-guided Qur'an literacy activities could encourage students' enthusiasm and participation. The Telaga Biru 8 findings demonstrate that motivation is integrated into routine practice rather than separated from technical reading instruction.

Students' positive responses provide further evidence of the personal significance of Qur'an literacy. The interviews indicate that some students enjoy reading the Qur'an and have aspirations related to becoming Qur'an memorizers or making their parents proud through improved reading ability. Such responses suggest that Qur'an literacy has personal and emotional meaning for students. Motivation in this context is therefore not limited to external rewards. Rather, students may connect Qur'an learning with religious identity, family expectations, and future aspirations. Similar research has found that meaningful Qur'an learning experiences can contribute to students' willingness to participate actively (Ramadani et al., 2024; Zanjabila et al., 2023).

Classroom concentration emerges as another important consideration in Qur'an reading instruction. The teacher reportedly controls and monitors students while they are reading, including moving around the classroom. This practice indicates that Qur'an reading instruction requires active classroom management. Concentration is particularly important because a small pronunciation error can change the quality of recitation. Active monitoring enables teachers to redirect students' attention and provide immediate correction. This findings complements research emphasizing teacher supervision in Qur'an learning (Syaifullah et al., 2022; Rusdi et al., 2022).

Discipline is likewise reinforced through individual monitoring of students' reading progress. The teacher asks students individually about the progress of their Qur'an reading, which creates accountability for learning. Such accountability can prevent students from becoming passive participants in group reading. Discipline also supports continuity because students are encouraged to maintain a consistent reading routine. This finding corresponds with the broader educational understanding that habituation and discipline reinforce one another in religious education. Siroz (2024) and recent Qur'an literacy studies similarly associate consistent practice with the development of religious learning habits.

The findings also highlight the family and home environment as important contextual factors that may constrain Qur'an learning. The research indicates that some parents are unable to provide sufficient Qur'an instruction at home because of work or other responsibilities. Some students, especially younger students, therefore rely heavily on school-based instruction. This condition places additional responsibility on the PAI teacher and school. Research on children's Qur'an literacy likewise identifies parental involvement as an important support mechanism (Nurluthfyani, 2023; Inten & Agustina, 2022). The finding indicates that school-based Qur'an programs need to be complemented by family engagement whenever possible.

Taken together, these practices indicate that the school has developed a practical form of integrated Qur'an literacy. The integration consists of daily or scheduled reading, grade-level differentiation, teacher modeling, Ummi-based instruction, monitoring, and motivation. None of these components alone fully explains the observed instructional process. Instead, their combination forms a school-based learning ecology. This integrated pattern is consistent with research emphasizing that Qur'an literacy improvement depends on interaction among teacher competence, learning method, student motivation, and environmental support (Amanulloh & Budiyo, 2023; Zanjabila et al., 2023).

The role of the PAI teacher becomes particularly significant within the context of a public elementary school. Unlike specialized Islamic schools, public elementary schools may serve students with highly diverse Qur'an learning backgrounds. The teacher therefore has to bridge differences between students who already possess reading experience and those who are beginning from basic letter recognition. The Telaga Biru 8 case illustrates how a single PAI teacher can use routine, differentiated practice, and direct guidance to address such diversity. This finding contributes contextual evidence to previous studies conducted in madrasahs and Islamic schools (Rusdi et al., 2022; A'yun & Romadlon, 2022).

The relationship between instructional method and teacher competence is also evident in the implementation of the Ummi method. The Ummi method is useful because it provides structure, but its implementation still depends on teacher understanding and consistency. The teacher must know how to demonstrate reading, guide students, monitor

progress, and maintain motivation. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing pedagogical competence as a determinant of effective Qur'an reading instruction. Al-Ghifaari et al. (2026) specifically highlight planning, varied methods, classroom management, and learning media as aspects of PAI teacher pedagogical competence. Therefore, method selection should always be accompanied by teacher capacity development. From a methodological perspective, the empirical evidence does not justify claiming a quantified causal improvement in reading ability. The research was qualitative and did not report standardized pretest and posttest scores. Therefore, the finding should be interpreted as evidence of instructional practices and observed student participation rather than statistical proof of effect size. This distinction is important for maintaining methodological accuracy. Qualitative studies of Qur'an literacy similarly emphasize description and interpretation rather than experimental causal inference (Rusdi et al., 2022; Darmasari & Wahab, 2023).

Continuous evaluation represents another important implication of the findings. The teacher's individual monitoring provides information about students' progress during learning. However, the research suggests an opportunity for schools to strengthen this process through more systematic documentation of students' reading development. Recent research on Qur'an learning assessment indicates that systematic assessment can help teachers identify specific competencies requiring reinforcement. Such assessment may include pronunciation, fluency, tajwīd, and reading accuracy. Thus, the present findings support the development of a more structured formative assessment system alongside the existing informal monitoring (Selian & Silahuddin, 2024; Syaifullah et al., 2022).

Beyond technical reading competence, the findings point to the broader educational significance of Qur'an reading. Qur'an literacy should not be understood solely as technical decoding of Arabic script. Within Islamic education, accurate reading provides an entry point for understanding, practicing, and internalizing Islamic teachings. The school's religious routines therefore have potential significance beyond reading competence because they establish repeated contact with religious texts and practices. Previous studies likewise emphasize that Qur'an learning can support students' religious character and engagement with Islamic values (Zanjabila et al., 2023; Rosi, 2021). Nevertheless, claims concerning broader character outcomes require separate evidence if they are to be empirically established.

The contextual integration of multiple instructional dimensions constitutes a notable contribution of the present study. Existing research has separately examined teacher roles, Ummi learning, motivation, parental support, and Qur'an literacy. The present case brings these dimensions together in a public elementary school in Banjarmasin. The study shows that Qur'an literacy development is constructed through a combination of structured routine, differentiated grade-level practice, Ummi-based instruction, direct teacher guidance, motivation, and monitoring. The empirical contribution therefore lies in describing this integrated configuration rather than claiming that one method independently causes improvement. This contextual contribution complements previous studies from Banyumas, Palembang, Pontianak, Jombang, and other educational settings (Amanulloh & Budiyo, 2023; Rusdi et al., 2022; Darmasari & Wahab, 2023).

Family involvement remains an important area for strengthening the existing school-based program. The existing school routine provides a strong institutional structure, but students' learning opportunities may be limited when practice does not

continue at home. Communication between teachers and parents could therefore provide a mechanism for sharing information about students' progress and suggesting appropriate home practice. Research on parental involvement in Qur'an literacy supports the importance of parents as models and learning companions. Such cooperation would not transfer the school's responsibility to parents but would create continuity between school and home learning environments (Nurluthfyani, 2023; Inten & Agustina, 2022).

The institutionalization of Qur'an reading within the school schedule also has implications for program sustainability. Because Qur'an reading is embedded in the school schedule, it does not depend exclusively on occasional special programs. This institutionalization may help maintain continuity even when classroom teaching time is limited. However, sustainability also requires consistent teacher commitment, adequate learning resources, appropriate monitoring, and school leadership support. Research on Qur'an literacy programs indicates that institutional support is important for maintaining instructional quality. Thus, the Telaga Biru 8 experience suggests that routine formation should be accompanied by school-level planning and evaluation (Kuncoro, 2022; A'yun & Romadlon, 2022). Finally, the findings allow an interpretive model of teacher practice to be formulated from the case. The model can be represented as habituation → differentiated guidance → teacher modeling → repeated practice → motivation → monitoring → formative correction. The model does not constitute a tested causal framework but rather an interpretive synthesis of the empirical practices documented in the study. Its value lies in showing how several ordinary teacher practices can be organized into a coherent Qur'an literacy process. Future research could test this model quantitatively or comparatively across several public elementary schools. Such development would extend the qualitative findings while maintaining the contextual insights produced by the present study (Noorhasanah, 2026; Zanjabila et al., 2023; Al-Ghifaari et al., 2026).

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that the Islamic Religious Education teacher at State Elementary School Telaga Biru 8 performs a multidimensional role in improving students' Qur'an reading ability. The role includes educating students in basic Qur'an reading, guiding students according to their abilities, demonstrating correct recitation, motivating students to practice, implementing the Ummi method, habituating Qur'an reading before lessons, and monitoring students' progress. The school differentiates Qur'an-related activities according to grade level, with short-surah review for younger students and direct Qur'an reading for students in higher grades. Student interest, motivation, concentration, and discipline support the implementation of the program, whereas family circumstances and environmental conditions may restrict reinforcement outside school. The principal contribution of the study lies in showing how Qur'an literacy in a public elementary-school setting can be developed through an integrated pattern of habituation, level-sensitive instruction, teacher modeling, Ummi-based learning, motivation, monitoring, and continuous practice. The study does not establish a statistical causal effect because its qualitative design was intended to describe and interpret educational practices rather than measure effect size. Nevertheless, the findings provide contextual evidence that the teacher's role is central to creating a sustainable Qur'an literacy culture. Strengthening collaboration among teachers, school leadership, students, and families can provide an important foundation for maintaining and developing students' Qur'an reading competence.

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