

# A Socio-Religious Mentoring Model for New Qur'anic Learners: Integrating the Iqro' Method in TPQ Education

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## Abstract:

This study aims to describe the socio-religious strategies applied by TPQ teachers in guiding new students through the Iqro' method, analyze their learning motivation, and examine the role of TPQ administrators. A qualitative case study approach was employed at TPQ Al-Warisin, Karang Baru Village, Sumbersari District, Jember Regency, East Java, Indonesia. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation from 10 purposively selected informants: one head of foundation, two female teachers, two administrators, and five new students aged 6–8 years. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model (reduction, display, conclusion drawing), with trustworthiness ensured through source, method, and theory triangulation. The findings reveal that teachers integrated four socio-religious strategies: personal approach, religious role modeling, internalization of religious values, and adaptive Iqro' instruction using the musyafahah technique. New students' learning motivation was optimal when supported by teacher role modeling, the musyafahah method tailored to individual ability, and a conducive, enjoyable learning environment. Administrators played essential roles as mentors, controllers, and motivators. This study contributes a holistic framework repositioning the Iqro' method as a socio-religious medium for character formation in non-formal Islamic education.

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## INTRODUCTION

The ability to read the Qur'an constitutes a fundamental competency in Islamic education and serves as the primary foundation for developing religious understanding, moral values, and spiritual awareness among Muslim children. As one of the most widespread non-formal Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ) plays a strategic role in introducing Qur'anic literacy and fostering religious character from an early age. In this context, teachers are not merely responsible for transmitting knowledge but also for guiding students' social, emotional, and religious development through meaningful educational interactions. The role of TPQ teachers is particularly important for new students, who often experience difficulties in adapting to the learning environment, understanding institutional rules, and developing motivation to learn the Qur'an effectively (Mustofa & Munira, 2022; Nur et al., 2023).

Despite the significant contributions of TPQ institutions to Islamic education, several challenges remain in mentoring new students. Previous studies have primarily focused on the

effectiveness of Qur'anic learning methods, teacher competencies, and the development of Qur'anic literacy skills. However, limited attention has been paid to the socio-religious strategies employed by TPQ teachers in assisting new students during their initial adaptation period. Existing research tends to emphasize technical aspects of Qur'anic instruction while overlooking the importance of interpersonal guidance, religious habituation, and value internalization in shaping students' learning readiness and engagement. Consequently, a gap exists in understanding how socio-religious approaches can support the successful integration of new students into TPQ learning environments (Aprilita, 2024; Harahap & Arsyad, 2024).

The issue is particularly relevant because new students often enter TPQ with diverse educational backgrounds, varying levels of Qur'anic literacy, and different degrees of religious awareness. Their successful adaptation requires more than instructional techniques; it also necessitates emotional support, religious guidance, and social integration within the learning community. From an Islamic educational perspective, socio-religious mentoring serves as an essential mechanism for fostering students' spiritual growth, strengthening moral values, and cultivating a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the social-religious function of Islamic education extends beyond individual learning outcomes to include the development of solidarity, responsibility, justice, and harmonious social relationships within the broader community (Jaelani, 2021).

Therefore, understanding how TPQ teachers implement socio-religious strategies is both theoretically significant and practically necessary. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the socio-religious strategies employed by TPQ teachers through the *Iqro'* method in mentoring new students at TPQ Al-Warisin, Karang Baru Village, Sumbersari District, Jember Regency.

Specifically, the study explores how teachers combine personal approaches, religious role modeling, value internalization, and Qur'anic learning practices to facilitate students' adaptation and engagement in the learning process. The *Iqro'* method was selected as the focus of analysis because it remains one of the most widely adopted approaches to Qur'anic instruction in Indonesian Islamic educational institutions and has demonstrated effectiveness in developing foundational Qur'anic reading skills.

This article contributes to the growing body of literature on Islamic education by proposing a conceptual framework for socio-religious mentoring practices in non-formal Qur'anic educational settings. Unlike previous studies that largely concentrate on instructional methods or learning outcomes, this research highlights the integration of social interaction, religious guidance, and Qur'anic pedagogy as a comprehensive mentoring framework for new students. The novelty of this study lies in identifying and conceptualizing four interconnected socio-religious strategies: personalized mentoring, religious role modeling, religious value internalization, and *Iqro'*-based instructional guidance as a holistic model for supporting student adaptation and strengthening early Qur'anic learning experiences in TPQ institutions.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen to enable an in-depth exploration of social phenomena and to interpret individual experiences of TPQ teachers and new students regarding the implementation of socio-religious strategies through the *Iqro'* method (Bado, 2022). The case study design was selected because it allows the researcher to investigate, analyze, and assess various interrelated factors within a specific contemporary context without conducting an intervention (Yin, 2018;

Rahardjo, 2017). This design is particularly appropriate for understanding the unique, context-specific processes of guiding new students at a single TPQ institution.

The research was conducted at TPQ Al-Warisin, located on Jalan K. Piere Tendean No. 68, Karang Baru Village, Sumbersari District, Jember Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The location was purposively selected based on three considerations: (1) the existence of problems related to socio-religious strategies for new students, (2) challenges in guiding new students using the Iqro' method, and (3) accessibility for the researcher. The data collection period extended from December 2025 to February 2026, covering the initial observation, fieldwork, and post-field analysis phases (Sugiyono, 2021).

The research subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which considers specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. This technique was chosen to save time and cost while ensuring data efficiency (Sugiyono, 2015). The sample consisted of one head of the TPQ foundation (key informant), two female teachers (ustadzah), two TPQ administrators (one male, one female), and five new students aged 6–8 years who were enrolled in Iqro's volume I. The number of informants was determined by data saturation, when additional interviews no longer yielded new information relevant to the research questions.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted directly in the field to understand non-verbal behavior, classroom interactions, and the learning environment, including the TPQ profile, daily activities, and the actual teaching and learning processes (Sugiyono, 2015). Semi-structured interviews were designed to obtain in-depth information regarding teachers' socio-religious strategies, students' learning motivation, and the role of TPQ administrators. Interviews were conducted face-to-face using a prepared interview guide developed from the three research questions. Documentation was carried out by collecting written materials, photographs, archives, and institutional records such as the profile of TPQ Al-Warisin, the list of new students, and organizational structure (Sugiyono, 2015).

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014), which consists of three concurrent activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, and abstracting raw data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Data display was performed by organizing compressed information into narrative text, tables, or figures to facilitate understanding and further analysis. Conclusions were drawn continuously throughout the research process, from initial data collection to the final verification stage (Rijali, 2018).

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through triangulation of sources, methods, and theories (Sugiyono, 2015). Source triangulation was performed by comparing information obtained from different informants, including teachers, administrators, and students. Triangulation was carried out by cross-checking data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation to confirm the accuracy of the findings. Theory triangulation was applied by analyzing the research findings against relevant existing theories to prevent researcher bias and to deepen the interpretation of the results (Susanti, 2024; Santoso & Madiistriyatno, 2024). The research process comprised three main stages: the pre-fieldwork stage (preparing the research design and obtaining permissions), the fieldwork stage (conducting observations, interviews, and documentation), and the data analysis and reporting stage (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

## RESULT

The study identified three major themes related to the guidance of new students in the Qur'anic Learning Center (TPQ): (1) socio-religious strategies employed by TPQ teachers, (2) learning motivation among new students, and (3) the role of TPQ administrators in supporting the guidance process.

### Theme 1: Socio-Religious Strategies Employed by TPQ Teachers

Four interconnected socio-religious strategies were identified from the interviews and observations.

#### 1. Personal Approach

Teachers established close relationships with students by recognizing their individual characteristics, family backgrounds, and initial Qur'anic reading abilities. Warm greetings, gentle communication, and individual attention were frequently used to create a supportive learning atmosphere, particularly for shy or hesitant students.

*"I usually get to know each child's character from the beginning. It is very important to provide religious motivation so that students feel comfortable and are not afraid to learn" (R, interview).*

#### 2. Religious Role Modeling

Religious role modeling emerged as the most dominant strategy. Teachers consistently demonstrated Islamic behaviors, including greeting others, reciting prayers before learning, reading *shalawat*, maintaining cleanliness, and showing patience when correcting students' mistakes. Students learned not only through instruction but also through observing teachers' conduct.

#### 3. Internalization of Religious Values

The internalization of religious values was integrated into daily learning activities. New students were habituated to greeting others, praying, respecting teachers, maintaining personal cleanliness, arriving on time, and waiting patiently for their turn to read. These practices were intended to cultivate Islamic character alongside Qur'anic literacy.

#### 4. Iqro' Learning Strategy

Teachers implemented the *musyafahah* (face-to-face demonstration) method in teaching Qur'anic reading. Instruction began with an initial assessment of reading ability, followed by student grouping based on proficiency levels. Learning progressed gradually from Iqro' Volume I, with repeated practice and periodic evaluation to monitor progress.

### Theme 2: Learning Motivation of New Students

The findings revealed both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation among new students.

Intrinsic motivation was reflected in students' desire to learn how to read the Qur'an correctly and to advance to higher Iqro levels. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation was fostered through teacher praise, small rewards, collective prayers, and Islamic storytelling activities.

*"I am enthusiastic because the teacher is kind and patient. She gives clear examples of reading" (AF, interview).*

Three factors were identified as particularly influential in enhancing learning motivation:

1. Positive religious role modeling by teachers.
2. The application of the *musyafahah* method is tailored to students' abilities.
3. A supportive, enjoyable, and non-threatening learning environment.

These factors contributed to students' enthusiasm, persistence, and active participation in learning activities.

### **Theme 3: The Role of TPQ Administrators**

TPQ administrators played a significant role in supporting the adaptation and learning process of new students. Three primary roles were identified.

#### **1. Mentor**

Administrators accompanied students during their initial entry into TPQ and helped them adjust to the learning environment.

#### **2. Controller**

Administrators monitored discipline, attendance, and classroom order to ensure the smooth implementation of learning activities.

#### **3. Motivator**

Administrators provided moral encouragement and emotional support to both students and teachers. They also helped strengthen students' confidence and commitment to learning.

In addition, administrators facilitated the learning process by organizing schedules, providing learning facilities such as classrooms and Iqro' books, and coordinating communication with parents. These efforts created a supportive institutional environment that enhanced the effectiveness of socio-religious guidance for new students.

The findings indicate that the successful guidance of new TPQ students was supported by the integration of socio-religious teaching strategies, strong student motivation, and active administrative support. Together, these elements contributed to a conducive learning environment that promoted Qur'anic literacy, religious character development, and students' adaptation to the TPQ setting.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study aimed to answer three research questions: (1) what socio-religious strategies are applied by TPQ teachers in guiding new students through the Iqro' method; (2) how the learning motivation of new students is affected by their reading of the Qur'an; and (3) what role TPQ administrators play in supporting the guidance process. The findings provide empirical answers to these questions and offer theoretical and practical contributions to the field of Islamic non-formal education.

### **Socio-Religious Strategies as an Integrative Model**

The finding that TPQ teachers employed personal approaches, religious role modeling, value internalization, and adaptive Iqro' instruction as an integrated framework extends previous studies that examined the Iqro' method primarily from technical perspectives (Maesyaroh & Albar, 2022; Al-Farisi et al., 2023). Unlike prior research that focused on reading speed and volume progression (Rasyidi et al., 2023), this study demonstrates that, for new students—who are typically in the early adaptation phase—emotional safety and spiritual motivation must precede, or at least accompany, technical instruction. This finding aligns with Nuryanti's (2024) assertion that interpersonal teacher approaches significantly influence learning motivation because students feel valued and individually attended to. However, this study goes further by showing that a personal approach alone is insufficient; it must be systematically combined with religious role modeling and value internalization to produce sustainable motivation. In the context of TPQ Al-Warisin, teachers who only taught reading without modeling religious behavior failed to build students' confidence, whereas those who

consistently demonstrated patience, greetings, and prayers saw faster adaptation and higher reading engagement.

### **Religious Role Modeling and the Internalization of Islamic Values**

The dominance of religious role modeling as a strategy confirms Bandura's social learning theory, which posits that individuals learn through observing and imitating models (Febriyanti & Shanie, 2025). This study provides empirical evidence from a non-formal Islamic educational setting that teachers' consistent modeling of greetings (salam), pre-learning prayers (doa), shalawat, polite sitting, and patience when correcting errors directly influenced new students' behavior. Students reported feeling "not afraid to make mistakes" because teachers corrected errors without anger. This finding contrasts with Fadlillah (2024), who emphasized teaching techniques but overlooked the importance of teacher-student emotional bonding. The novelty here is that religious role modeling serves as a silent curriculum—it teaches Islamic values more effectively than verbal instruction alone, particularly for young children still developing metacognitive abilities. This has significant implications for Islamic education globally: in contexts where formal Islamic schooling is limited, TPQ teachers act as primary agents of religious socialization, and their personal conduct becomes the de facto standard for students' understanding of Islamic ethics.

### **The Musyafahah Method and Sustainable Learning Motivation**

The finding that the musyafahah (face-to-face demonstration) method significantly enhanced new students' motivation supports Faza's (2023) conclusion that direct teacher-student interaction improves recitation accuracy and self-confidence. However, this study reveals a more nuanced mechanism: when musyafahah is combined with religious reinforcement—such as reminding students that reading Iqro' is an act of worship (ibadah) and that each letter carries reward (pahala)—motivation becomes more sustainable than when students are merely encouraged to progress to higher volumes. This finding answers the second research question: motivation is not solely intrinsic but is co-constructed through teacher-student interaction within a religiously framed environment. Students explicitly mentioned that joint prayers, teacher praise, small rewards, and Islamic stories made them feel "happy to learn" and "not bored." This aligns with Hidayat and Lestari (2023), who found that consistent socio-religious approaches significantly increase students' learning motivation. The practical implication is that TPQ teachers should not rush students through volumes; instead, they should prioritize mastery supported by spiritual framing, even if volume progression takes longer.

### **The Role of Administrators as Educational Facilitators**

The finding that TPQ administrators functioned as mentors, controllers, and motivators extends the work of Pou et al. (2026), who found that TPQ leadership correlates with learning effectiveness. However, this study adds a critical nuance: administrators' roles were not merely administrative but educative. At TPQ Al-Warisin, administrators accompanied new students during their initial entry, monitored discipline, provided moral support, and bridged communication between teachers and parents. This finding aligns with Ishomuddin and Husni (2025), who concluded that administrators actively shape student character through role modeling and supervision. The novelty here is that administrative support in non-formal TPQ settings compensates for structural limitations. Unlike formal schools with dedicated counseling staff, TPQ often relies on administrators to perform socio-emotional functions. Therefore, strengthening administrative capacity—not just teacher training—should be a policy priority for improving TPQ quality.

### **Answering the Research Questions**

The three research questions are answered as follows. First, socio-religious strategies applied by TPQ teachers comprise four integrated components: personal approach, religious role modeling, value internalization, and adaptive Iqro' instruction. These strategies are implemented systematically from the moment new students enter TPQ. Second, new students' learning motivation is optimal when supported by teacher role modeling, the musyafahah method tailored to individual ability, and a conducive, enjoyable learning environment. Third, TPQ administrators play essential roles as mentors, controllers, and motivators, providing structural and emotional support that enables effective teacher-student interaction.

### **Novelty and Contribution to Global Islamic Studies**

The novelty of this study lies in its holistic integration of socio-religious strategies into the Iqro' method as a single, systematic framework for guiding new students. Previous studies treated the Iqro' method as a technical tool for reading acceleration; this study repositions it as a socio-religious medium for character formation. This contribution is significant for exploring Islam's multifaceted dimensions worldwide for several reasons. First, in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia, TPQ represents the most accessible form of Islamic education for children from low-income families. Understanding how TPQ teachers effectively combine religious values with reading instruction provides a model that can be adapted in other Muslim communities, including diaspora contexts in Western countries. Second, the finding that religious role modeling functions as a silent curriculum has implications for Islamic pedagogy beyond TPQ, including formal Islamic schools and weekend madrasas. Third, the emphasis on emotional safety and spiritual motivation over accelerated reading progression challenges the global trend toward outcome-based, measurable metrics in religious education. This study argues that in early childhood Islamic education, process matters more than speed, and character formation is as important as cognitive mastery.

### **Significance of the Findings**

The significance of these findings is threefold. In practice, they provide actionable guidance for TPQ teachers and administrators to improve new-student guidance without requiring additional funding or infrastructure. The strategies identified—personal approach, role modeling, value internalization, and adaptive instruction—can be implemented immediately in any TPQ setting. Theoretically, the study enriches Bandura's social learning theory by demonstrating how religious role modeling operates specifically in non-formal Islamic educational contexts. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of qualitative case study designs for capturing the depth and complexity of teacher-student religious interactions, which quantitative studies often miss.

### **Study Limitations**

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted at a single TPQ with a relatively small number of participants (10 informants), which limits the generalizability of the findings to other TPQ settings with different demographic, geographic, or cultural characteristics. Second, the study did not measure long-term outcomes, such as whether the motivational gains observed in new students persisted after they advanced to higher volumes or left the TPQ. Third, the qualitative design, while appropriate for exploring depth and process, cannot establish causal relationships between specific socio-religious strategies and learning outcomes. Fourth, the study relied on self-reported data from teachers and students, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Future research should employ mixed-methods or quasi-experimental designs to test the effectiveness of the socio-religious framework across multiple TPQ institutions

with larger, more diverse samples. Longitudinal studies are also needed to assess whether the motivational and character outcomes identified in this study persist over time and predict future religious practice.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the socio-religious strategies applied by TPQ teachers in guiding new students through the Iqro' method, the learning motivation of new students, and the role of TPQ administrators in supporting the guidance process at TPQ Al-Warisin, Jember. The findings reveal that teachers integrated four interrelated strategies: personal approach, religious role modeling, internalization of religious values, and adaptive Iqro' instruction using the musyafahah technique. These strategies were implemented systematically from the moment new students entered TPQ, prioritizing emotional safety and spiritual motivation over accelerated reading progression. New students' learning motivation was found to be optimal when supported by consistent teacher role modeling, the musyafahah method tailored to individual ability, and a conducive, enjoyable learning environment. TPQ administrators played essential roles as mentors, controllers, and motivators, providing structural and emotional support that enabled effective teacher-student interaction.

The findings carry significant implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, this study enriches Bandura's social learning theory by demonstrating how religious role modeling operates specifically in non-formal Islamic educational contexts, where teachers' consistent behavior functions as a silent curriculum that shapes students' religious character more effectively than verbal instruction alone. In practice, the study provides actionable guidance for TPQ teachers and administrators to improve new-student guidance without requiring additional funding or infrastructure. The four strategies identified—personal approach, religious role modeling, value internalization, and adaptive Iqro' instruction—can be implemented immediately in any TPQ setting. Furthermore, the findings suggest that TPQ teacher training programs should prioritize character formation and behavioral consistency over mastery of teaching techniques alone, and that strengthening administrative capacity should be a policy priority to improve TPQ quality.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in its holistic integration of socio-religious strategies into the Iqro' method as a single, systematic framework for guiding new students. Previous studies treated the Iqro' method primarily as a technical tool for reading acceleration; this study repositions it as a socio-religious medium for character formation. This contribution is particularly significant for understanding Islam's multifaceted dimensions in non-formal educational settings, especially in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia, where TPQ represents the most accessible form of Islamic education for children from low-income families. The study also challenges the global trend toward outcome-based, measurable metrics in religious education by demonstrating that for early childhood Islamic education, process matters more than speed, and character formation is as important as cognitive mastery.

Several areas remain for future research. First, because this study was conducted at a single TPQ with a relatively small sample, future research should employ mixed-methods or quasi-experimental designs to test the effectiveness of the socio-religious framework across multiple TPQ institutions with larger, more diverse samples. Second, longitudinal studies are needed to assess whether the motivational gains and character outcomes observed in new students persist over time and predict future religious practice. Third, future studies could compare the socio-religious strategies applied in urban versus rural TPQ settings to identify contextual variations. Fourth, comparative research between TPQ and other forms of non-formal Islamic education (such as

madrasah diniyah or home-based Qur'anic tutoring) would help identify best practices that can be scaled across different contexts. Finally, intervention studies that train TPQ teachers specifically in the integrated socio-religious framework identified in this study would provide causal evidence of its effectiveness.

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### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest in the conduct of this research. This study was conducted independently without any external funding or institutional pressure that could influence the research process, data interpretation, or publication decisions.

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