

EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINING QUR'ANIC MEMORIZATION: A CASE STUDY

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Submission Date: 7th February 2021

Acceptance Date: 6th June 2021

Abstract: This study explored the challenges of sustaining Qur'anic memorization among graduated secondary school students. The study's objectives are to explore the challenges of sustaining Qur'anic memorization among the graduated secondary school students; to explain the challenges faced by them in sustaining Quranic memorization; and to investigate the ways they overcome the challenges in sustaining Qur'anic memorization. Semi-structured interviews with 8 *huffaẓ* secondary school graduates were conducted to collect the data. The findings show that there are 12 challenges of sustaining Qur'anic memorization involve forgetfulness, environmental, mixed up verses, time management, influence from others, emotion, menstruation, lack of discipline, difficult to remember, unfamiliar with certain words, entertainment, and other activities. They overcome the challenges by referring back to the Qur'an, ask someone to examine, recall, relate to real-life situation, join religious classes, befriending people that motivate, encouragement from family, memorize and reflect, listening to Qur'anic recitation, do spiritual activities, aware of priority, forgetfulness as inspiration, tawakkal and fixed schedule for memorization. Using these methods help them in memorizing Qur'an while dealing with these challenges, which they manage to overcome them.

Keywords: *Hifẓ*, Qur'anic Memorization, Al-Qur'an Education, Islamic Education.

Introduction

The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH) in Arabic for more than 1400 years ago, to guide us through life. As the Prophet's *mu'jizat*, it functions as the main source of Islam along with hadith; and reading it is commended as an act of worship: "Indeed, those who recite the Book of Allah and establish prayer and spend [in His cause] out of what We have provided them, secretly and publicly, [can] expect a profit that will never perish" (Fatir: 29).

Furthermore, there is the guarantee from the Allah Almighty that the contents of the Qur'an will be forever preserved, as stated in the ayat below: "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)" (Al-Hijr: 9).

According to Halilovic (2007), the word 'guard' in the previous verse meant guarding the authenticity of the Qur'an. There are two ways on how the Qur'an is guarded—first: by writing the verses of the Qur'an; and second: through reciting by heart or memorization. Memorizing the Qur'an has been practiced since the era of the Prophet (PBUH), in which it became a sunnah since he set an example by memorizing the Qur'an then encouraging his companions to do the same (Nik Abdullah, 2019). The culture of Qur'an memorization was preserved even after the Prophet and his companions died, and it continues to spread throughout the world through Islamic *da'wah*. In recent days, *tabfiẓ* centers and

religious schools exist all over the world to produce more *huffaz*, including Malaysia. In Malaysia's Muslim society, the *huffaz* are highly respected due to their ability and efforts in memorizing the Qur'an, hence why it is well preserved until today. Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) mentioned the *huffaz* as the most honorable, as stated in the following: "*The best of you is those who learn the Quran and teach it*" (Sahih al-Bukhari: 5027).

Therefore, many schools, either private or government-based, provided a special module for students to memorize the Qur'an, in which they will graduate after they succeed to memorize the whole Qur'an. However, as *hafiz* and *hafizah*, they have a huge responsibility as the ones who carry the Qur'an inside their minds, therefore sustaining memorization during the school era must continue even after graduation.

In the book *al-Tibyan fi Adab Hamalat al-Quran* (Etiquette with the Qur'an) written by Imam al-Nawawi, he emphasized on the responsibilities the *huffaz* needed to have after managing to learn the verses of the Qur'an by heart, which are honesty and integrity. When the students are in *tahfiz* institutions, they follow a set routine determined for them including memorization schedules, time management, and certain practices in a *huffaz*-oriented environment. However, after graduating from *tahfiz* schools, the *huffaz* faces new environments different from those in *tahfiz* institutions. Therefore, their lifestyle changed as the challenges of sustaining Qur'an memorization became harder (Abdullah M., Abdullah, Rosman, & Ilias, 2016).

Being a *hafiz* or *hafizah* meant that he or she held great responsibility in preserving Qur'an memorized in their heart and the reward his parents will be given to wear a crown. Mu'adh al-Juhani reported the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) as saying: "*If anyone recites the Qur'an and acts according to its content, on the Day of Judgement his parents will be given to wear a crown whose light is better than the light of the sun in the dwellings of this world if it were among you. So, what do you think of him who acts according to this?*" (Sunan Abi Dawud: 1453).

Qur'anic Memorization in Malaysia

Islam is spreading all over the world. Along with the spread of Islam and many *huffaz* doing *da'wah*, the Qur'an has been preserved to the present day. Its content guides Muslims toward doing good in the world, and it has since encouraged efforts to increase Qur'anic generation in the Malaysian community.

Before the British came to Malay, the Holy Qur'an was taught informally at teachers' houses. Then, Pondok schools and madrasahs were founded by Muslim scholars where the students learned the Book of Allah and another Islamic knowledge. During the British Colonization period, a British officer, A.M. Skinner, introduced Qur'an classes into formal primary school, where students learned Malay language in the morning and Qur'an in the evening. However, it did not receive positive reactions from Malay parents (Ahmad, 2000).

The idea of *tahfiz* education began after the National Qur'an Recitation Ceremony (Majlis Tilawah al-Qur'an Kebangsaan) in 1960. Under Malaysia's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj proposition, the government founded a Qur'anic Memorization and Qira'at Class that was held at National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur in 1966. The class was managed by National Mosque Qur'anic Memorization Unit from 1966 until 1978.

The development of *tahfiz* education continued to grow in 1972 when it became Ma'had Tahfiz al-Qur'an wal Qira'at (MTQ) under Islamic Affairs Unit in Prime Minister Department with two objectives: to produce qaris who are also huffaz that are knowledgeable in Qur'anic knowledge, and to be an active academic center of Qur'an learning among society. Due to its positive development, the name Ma'had Tahfiz al-Qur'an wal Qira'at changed to the Institute of Tahfiz al-Qur'an wal Qira'at Studies (IPTQ) (Abdullah, Abdullah, & Ilias, 2015). Nowadays, IPTQ is widely known as Darul Qur'an

under Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) supervision. According to statistics, more than 815 *tahfiz* schools are registered in Malaysian public and private institutions. In 2019, the estimated number of *huffaz* was close to 47,474 students, with 5,426 *tahfiz* teachers (Nik Abdullah, 2019).

These *tahfiz* schools provide a suitable and conducive environment for students to memorize the Qur'an. Students' memorization will always be observed by certified teachers in their respective schools. However, after leaving secondary school, students are no longer under their school supervision to ensure that they continue to sustain Qur'anic memorization.

Problem Statement

To provide adequate Islamic knowledge, many Islamic academic institutions, such as *tahfiz* institutions, *madrasahs*, *ma'had*, and Islamic schools, have been established in Malaysia. Some of the academic institutions and secondary schools such as Darul Qur'an, Ministry of Education (MOE), MARA Junior Science College (MRSM) 'Ulul Albab, Kelantan Islamic Foundation (YIK) and Imtiyaz Primary School offered *tahfiz* courses due to the society's demands in producing more *huffaz*, especially from parents themselves (Md Yusnan, 2020). The institutions usually had their syllabus or modules for Quran memorization, often monitoring students' progress to ensure that they manage to memorize within certain periods. In the study conducted by Hashim and Tamuri (2012), all the methods utilized in *tahfiz* schools such as *tikrar*, *talaqqi*, and *musyafahah* are all important methods. According to the research conducted by Sabbri (2016), it was found that secondary school students' motivation played a crucial role in memorizing the Quran. Although most researchers focused on Qur'anic memorization among secondary school students, there is a lack of research on the sustainment of Qur'anic memorization among secondary school leavers.

After graduating and becoming a *hafiz* or *hafizah*, they will be exposed to environments outside of *tahfiz* institutions and face new challenges to sustain Qur'an memorization, as they will no longer receive supervision.

Therefore, the objectives of this study are to explain the challenges faced by the graduated secondary school students in sustaining Quranic memorization and to investigate the ways graduated secondary school students overcome the challenges in sustaining Qur'anic memorization.

Literature Review

The Importance of Qur'anic Memorization

Memorizing the Qur'an is an honorable act of worship. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself paid so much attention toward the memorization of the Qur'an to protect it from any changes so that it was preserved until the end of the Day. However, as human beings, we tend to forget even though we once remembered the Qur'anic texts. Because of that, it is recommended for us to rehearse frequently especially after committing the verses in memory, and be warned of the risk of forgetting them by the Prophet (PBUH), as narrated by Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (may Allah bless him): "*Commit yourself to the Qur'an, for by Him in whose Hand is my soul, it is surely more prone to break away than a camel in its bind*" (Sahih al-Bukhari: 5033).

It is very difficult and challenging to sustain the Qur'anic memorization and prevent forgetfulness. Frequent recitation and repetition of the texts help one from forgetfulness. Sustaining memorization requires an enormous amount of effort, sacrifice, and patience. According to Imam al-Nawawi in his book *al-Tibyan fi Adab Hamalat al-Qur'an* (Etiquette with the Qur'an) the Righteous Forebears (may Allah be pleased with them) continuously completing the Qur'an recitation. Some of them finished

reciting the Qur'an once every two months or one month; once every ten or eight nights; every week, every six, five, four or three nights; every two nights, every day and night, twice every day and night, twice each day and even eight times—four by night and four by day. The ones who managed to finish the Qur'an every day were Uthman bin Affan, Tamim al-Dari, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, Mujahid, al-Syafi'e, and others. The amount of effort and sacrifice they made by completing the Qur'anic recitation every day to sustain memorization is exemplary. Some of the Religious Forebears took a longer amount of time to complete the Qur'an as some of them went into a deep reflection of the readings and its meanings, some of them were preoccupied with spreading knowledge and other work for the sake of Islam. Hence, the amount of recitation should not be a burden as one must accomplish what is expected of him (Al-Nawawi, 2003).

Sustaining the memorization of the Qur'an is very crucial as forgetting it is considered as a great sin. Imam al-Nawawi (2003) wrote in his book that Anas ibn Malik narrated from the Prophet (PBUH) said: *"The rewards of my people were presented before me, so much so that even the reward for removing a mote by a person from the mosque was presented to me. The sins of my people were also presented before me. I did not find a sin greater than that of a person forgetting the Qur'anic chapter or verse memorised by him"* (Sunan Abi Dawud: 461).

Deliberately forgetting the Qur'an because of laziness and carelessness due to worldly matters is a sin. However, forgetting because of weak memory is forgiven as it is one of the human characteristics (Al-Bakri, 2018).

In a nutshell, methods of sustaining Qur'anic memorization is very important for every *hafiz* and *hafizah* to be able to continue retaining the verses of the Qur'an in their heart and brain.

The Process of Qur'anic Memorization

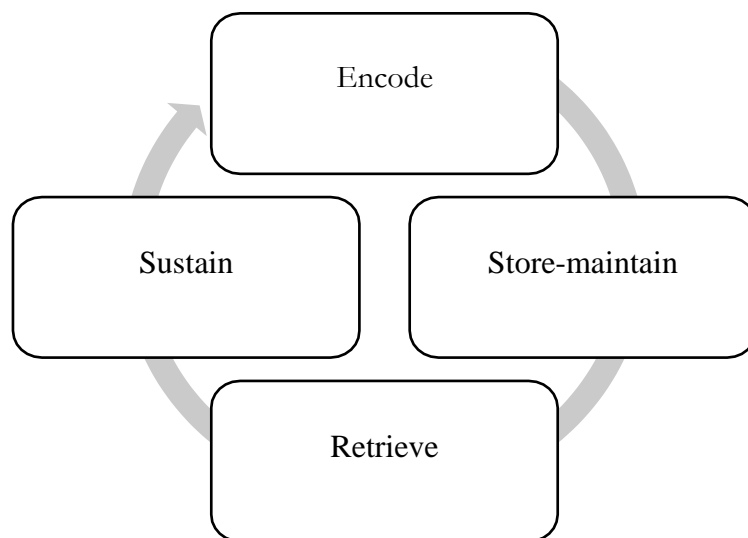


Figure 1: The process of Qur'anic memorization (Nawaz & Jahangir, 2015)

Memorizing involves the process of encoding, storing, and retrieving the Qur'anic verses by practicing and reciting it repetitively by heart, which is also known as *hifz*. The Qur'anic memorization involves a few steps. First, the memorizers must encode the Qur'an verses attentively, then storing it by maintaining the encoded information of the verses. Lastly, the memorizers must retrieve the information from memory stores by reciting it by heart. Once the process is done, they must sustain it in their memory so that it would not lose (Nawaz & Jahangir, 2015).

Furthermore, Lieberman (2012) stated that learning and memory are “inextricably intertwined”. Learning results in the acquisition of knowledge and new skill while memory is the capacity of our brain to recall gained information. Therefore, learning necessarily involves memory. To prove that one did learn something, one must use his memory to remember the information, as remembering is the most basic of learning in Bloom’s Taxonomy. In Islam, memorization often relates to reciting the Qur’an and *hadith* by heart. According to Mohd Gunawan Che Ab Aziz, the Chairman of *Ikatan Ilmuwan Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah* Malaysia (ISLAMI), *tahfiz* education is the basis of education in the Islamic scholar tradition (Yusop, 2019). Looking back at the previous famous Islamic scholars, most of them started their education by memorizing the Quran. For example, Imam Shafi’e and al-Ghazali studied and memorized the Qur’an in their youth before seeking another knowledge. Even when we were little, we had to memorize at least surah Al-Fatihah as it is obligatory to be recited in the five daily prayers. Therefore, for the Muslims, memorizing and sustaining the Qur’an (either part of it or the whole of it) in the heart acts as a base in our life.

Memory Theory

There are many studies related to memory retention discussed by scholars and researchers. Atkinson and Shiffrin proposed Multi-Store Model in 1968 where they suggested that human memory has three states: sensory memory, short-term memory stores, and long-term memory stores. In the human brain, information passes from one state to the other by rehearsals. However, the information will be lost if not enough attention is given to it (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968). When information is received, it is retained in the sensory memory for a short period. If attention is given, some of the input is transferred to the short-term memory storage for a few seconds or longer, especially when rehearsals of information are involved. More rehearsals of information retained in short-term memory storage will allow it to enter the long-term memory storage. However, loss of information in the long-term memory section can happen if there is interference, such as lack of repetition, resulting in lost accessibility of information in the brain, which is also known as forgetfulness.

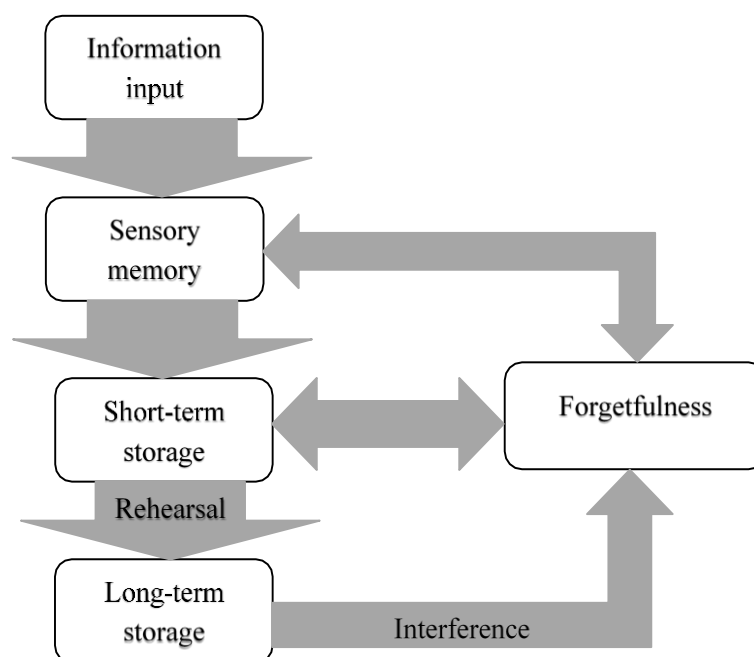


Figure 2: Memorization theory was adopted from Atkinson and Shiffrin’s Memory Model (1968)

Craik and Lockhart (1972) further critically explained that information does not simply process through three states of memory as in the Multi-Store Model, but also depended on the quality of processing information of a stimulus. In their Levels of Processing theory, they divided the levels of processing of

a stimulus into two types, shallow and deep processing. In shallow processing, every physical or sensory stimulus is recognized, but later easily forgotten if it does not undergo deep processing, where the stimuli or information are further analyzed by associating them with past knowledge, recognizing patterns, and extracting meaning. This shows that in sustaining memorization, the ‘depth of processing’ or elaborative rehearsals of information is important to prevent forgetfulness. In a study by Ikhwanuddin (2013) on the relationships between memorization techniques and understanding of the Qur’an, he found that the respondents’ scores for Qur’anic *tafsir* and memorization are significant. By studying the *tafsir*, helps to understand the meaning of the texts (deepens the processing of memory), which further strengthen the memorization of the Qur’an.

Methodology

The study adopted one of the qualitative studies, the case study design, which used an exploratory method to meet the research objectives mentioned above. Eight participants are selected according to the characteristics determined by the researchers. The characteristics of the participants where: they must be *hafiz* or *hafizah* graduated from any secondary school. A semi-structured interview in Malay was conducted for this study, with interview questions predetermined by the researchers, including several probe questions. The results of one-on-one semi-structured interviews were written into the data transcripts. Transcripts were encoded into numerous categories or patterns of each interview data transcript since qualitative data could not be quantified.

Findings

Demographic Background of The Participants

Based on the interview, there are 4 male participants and 4 female participants. The researchers found that all the participants graduated from Religious Secondary Schools, indicated that they had been exposed to Islamic educational background. Two of the participants, which was participant 3 and participant 5 already exposed to Qur’anic memorization since elementary years while the remaining participants started to memorize the Qur’an during secondary years. In addition, participant 1 already graduated from a bachelor’s education, four of them continued the master’s degree and two of them are currently taking bachelor’s degrees. In addition, two participants received a *syahadah* certificate which was given to them after being qualified as *huffaz* through examinations.

Table 1: Participant Demographic

Participant No.	Gender	Educational Background	Year Finish Memorizing the Qur’an	Syahadah Certificate
P1	F	BD	2013	
P2	F	BD	2016	
P3	F	MD	2009	✓
P4	F	MD	2010	
P5	M	BD	2011	
P6	M	MD	2011	✓
P7	M	MD	2014	
P8	M	BD	2012	

M= Male, F= Female, BD= Bachelor’s degree, MD= Master’s degree, -= Indicate not stated

Challenges in Sustaining Qur'anic Memorization

Sustaining memorization among *buffaḥ* could be arduous as it was challenging to memorize the whole Qur'an. The **Table 2** below shown were the challenges in sustaining Qur'anic memorization identified and listed in the form of table.

Table 2: The Challenges in Sustaining Qur'anic Memorization

Participant \ Challenge	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
FF		✓	✓		✓		✓	
EV	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
MV		✓						
CTM		✓		✓	✓			
IFO		✓			✓			
EM		✓	✓	✓				
PE			✓					
LD			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
DM					✓		✓	
UW				✓				
ET				✓			✓	
OA	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓

FF= forgetfulness, EV= environmental challenge, MV= mixed up verses, CTM= challenge in time management, IFO= influence from others, EM= emotion, PE= period, LD= lack of discipline, DM= difficult to remember, UW= unfamiliar with certain words, ET= entertainment, OA= occupied with other activities

Forgetfulness

When asked how many times he repeated difficult verses to memorize such as similar verses (*ayat mutasyabihat*), Participant 2 said that sometimes even she repeated it several times, she remained forgetful although when doing it alone because she could not realize that she had been repeating the wrong verse, "Sometimes even when I repeated it several times I still forgot...sometimes when I recite the verses so many times it was useless because I had been repeating the wrong verse."

There were other participants who forgot the verses of the Quran while reciting it during prayer, "It was hard when forgetting (the verses) in the middle of prayer, definitely have to look back at it." (Participant 3)

"I do forgot. Usually, if I forgot, I changed the short surah and when it was over, for example, when we have read it, we bow, right, usually after the bow, I just remembered. It was like if forgot that, if it was me, I rarely remembers it on the spot." (Participant 7)

Meanwhile, Participant 5 tended to forget short *surahs* especially when he did not remember its meaning, "When there were short verses in the surah, it becomes a problem, especially if we did not remember the meaning. Because we went from sentence to sentence which there was a lot, so I cannot remember the head of its verse."

Environmental Challenge

In terms of environment, Participant 1 felt the environment was different when in university, "When in degree level, I just started to get to know friend, get to know his background, want to know new people... it must feel a little different right. She also experienced culture shock due to mixing with the Muslim and non-Muslim communities."

"I also experienced culture shock there too... Because there was the college, the residence is half Muslim and half non-Muslim. So, for people who may never, unfamiliar to be in a bit of a culture shock as well."

Meanwhile, Participant 2 experienced a change in the environment right after graduated from school, *"When I finish regular school, it was usual that I was a little surprised. I did not follow the school format anymore, right. Haa the kind of school there must have a repetition format. The school has a format every time the prayer time arrived, we repeated 5 pages. After that, when students cannot repeat up to 5 pages, it was easy at least a day after prayer, repeat 1 page. Haa that is the school format. But when I finished school, I did not do that either. Umm kind of missed that kind of thing."*

Besides, Participant 2 also did not find friends that want the Quran during foundation studies and in the university degree level, *"At the beginning of the CFS, I did not meet friends who seemed to want the Qur'an. That is one of the environmental challenges. This semester I have more friends with the club members than my coursemates. So, a different environment causes my heart to not feel close to good things. So, it was a little annoying in terms of memorization because it feels like 'like other people don't even do the same thing, later on, be shy, other people don't even repeat it' haa it felt like that."*

Participant 5 stated that the environmental challenge that he faced during his degree study was self-efficacy and influence from others, *"Now, my external challenge is in terms of the environment. Because we are now in the middle of this degree, each of us brings our own direction. If you are diligent you do, if you are lazy you do not. So, it depended on our environment if we sit with people who are not among the people who memorize, so we also seem to be involved as well."*

Participant 6 experienced a new environment after graduating from maahad tahfiz where he memorized the Qur'an, in which the madrasah he enrolled did not emphasize in Qur'an memorization, *"One of the challenges can be said umm was bi'ab. The environment plays a very important role. Even though I used to go to the madrasah after Maahad Tahfiz Pulai Chondong. That was Madrasah! But there is no time to repeat (the Qur'an). The madrasah is not for memorizing the Qur'an. Not to memorize the Qur'an but just to learn. But every morning, will read ratib al-attos. So just do dhikr... when we were at the maahad tahfiz we used to do dhikr after dawn just like a little azkar as-sobah, then it was time for the Qur'an. In contrast to entering the madrasah, throughout the morning it was used for dhikr."*

Just like other previous participants' statements, Participant 7 also said that the environment affected him in that he felt the difference in spirit when with friends did not memorize the Qur'an, *"The external challenge was indeed the environmental challenge. Meaning, when I want to do muraja'ah there were no friends because when in that environment, the spirit was different. If like we with friends that were not the type to memorize, the spirit was different."*

Mixed-Up Verses

The interview with Participant 2 revealed that even though one already memorized the verses of Qur'an, one could be mixed up the verses, *"When I entered the university, for example, the ustaz told me to memorize, the memorization seemed like it could not be stick because it was already in my brain. So, it looks like the story of this surah was mixed with the story of another surah or I imagined but in fact, it included other verses... it was still difficult for me to memorize what I have kept for a long time in the brain because all kinds of stories have entered the head.. already a lot of verses."*

Challenge in Time Management

Three participants found it difficult to manage time for sustaining memorization. Participant 2 said that she did not arrange a specific time for memorization, *"I was busy for a while but did not go to the tasmi' class... Because I was the one who did not take the time to repeat."*

Meanwhile, for Participant 4, she admitted that there were times she could not finish repeating the entire *juzuk*, *"If I repeat one juzuk, I try to be consistent with one juzuk, but there are days when I really don't have time to finish it."*

"I tried to do murajaah 1 juzuk per day but because it was a lot, so I missed it too." (Participant 5)

Influence from Others

Initially, Participant 2 wanted to enroll in the Quran niche for her co-curriculum in university... However, due to the influence of her friend, she decided not to, *"Actually, the first time I got into my degree, I wanted to go and take the niche of the Qur'an, which is the co-curriculum of tahfiz al-Qur'an... I want to take that, but my friend said during her time it used to be a little strict, people find it difficult to take that niche and kind of afraid of the pressure because we want to repeat not to catch up to the syllabus. But if in IIUM, we have to catch up on the syllabus, that is why she asked me to choose another niche. But I was also wrong because apparently, I did have to have a system that forced me. Otherwise, I got distracted myself. Because it was common at the school to use a system. When there is no system, I myself am in a mess."*

On the other hand, Participant 5 was influenced by his friends, albeit he believed that it depended on our own selves whether to keep memorization or not, *"... I socialize with everyone, it means regardless people who memorize or not memorize (the Qur'an), I befriended them, but it also affects me... it depends on ourselves, our selves... if you are diligent you do, if not, you didn't, you didn't do it."*

Emotional Challenges

In the interview, participant 2 mentioned emotion or heart affected her memorization. When experiencing external challenges, it influenced internal condition i.e., the heart and emotion, *"In terms of the heart, such external challenges cause our internal to be affected. That means we have.. if we memorize the Qur'an, in terms of our feelings are disturbed or know how our hearts are going back and forth, it will have an effect on our memorization."*

The interview with Participant 3 found that a person could be bored in being consistent using one method to sustain memorization because it took a long time to see its effectiveness, *"The challenge was boredom. I was easily tired of what I did to maintain using one method and see the effectiveness was the most challenging. Because each method I must be patient, about a year to see the results. So, I never see the total success."*

Besides, Participant 4 said that the bad emotion such as jealousy towards people came from not guarding one's eyes on social media, *"Then it feels like.. guarding our sight was important. Plus, now in social media, we were not even aware of it. Because I think the heart problem stemmed from our sight, which counted as external as well. Become jealous of people... Thought badly of people."*

Menstruation Period

Throughout all the interviews with female participants, only participant 2 mentioned period as the most challenging in sustaining the memorization. Due to long duration of period, she preferred not to memorize the Qur'an following what she learned in madrasah except if she truly forgot what she had memorized, *"My biggest challenge was the long duration of period. I am a person who does not recite during, so.. at the madrasah, indeed the madrasah taught me like that. Some madrasahs did not permit recitation (during period), some madrasahs permit it, but I preferred not to recite during my period unless in a situation I truly did not remember very well."*

Lack of Discipline

Five of 8 participants admitted that lack of discipline became one of the challenges in sustaining the Quran memorization. For Participant 3, she felt that the reasons behind her lack of discipline were less determination, unclear of the reason she memorized the Quran, and not truly know Allah SWT, *“Another internal challenge, lack of discipline. Lack of determination... I felt because I did not have a clear goal why I memorize the Qur'an, did not know Allah enough.. Did not know then did not love right.”*

Participant 4 found it difficult to be consistent while being alone, *“... After it ended, I could not be consistent because consistency was easier when we have .. we make it as a commitment that we were not alone, like in the class. If we follow the class, we will see it as something we had to do. So that discipline will be higher. But once we tried to apply alone, in other words I sometimes make the schedule very randomly, so sometimes self-management makes it difficult to stick to that method. That's why I sometimes just read ... instead of being able to get 1 juzuk, I can't get 1 juzuk.”*

Different for Participant 3 and Participant 4, Participant 5 lacked discipline when he was on semester break where he did not follow his own time schedule set for memorization, *“...Usually I... Like this, the determination when I go back on semester break must be 'Ha I have to memorize a lot of this and a lot of this after prayers' but it was only in the beginning..I think at one time I can take one page but normally... I did not reach the target because the time of maghrib to isyak and the time of isyak I did not do it. So, in the morning I get 2 pages, usually no more than 3 pages. Because usually after dawn, it was normal like that, isn't it a little sleepy hibi...”*

Participant 7 felt lazy to revise his memorization, *“The challenge... Lazy to muraja'ah... I do not know, sometimes... the awareness seemed to be non-existent. It felt kind of lazy, felt lazy. But I could not fight it too hard.”*

Likewise, participant 8 also sometimes felt lazy to memorize his memorization, *“...Sometimes the feeling of laziness come. I do not know sometimes I have lost the motivation to repeat memorization... I do other things instead...”*

Difficult to Recall Short Verses

Two participants thought that recalling short verses were hard due to its short and many verses in one surah, *“I think, all hafiz hafizah, we have a lot of problems with the surah with short verses. Example surah As-Saffat, surah Az-Dzariyat right.. when in the surah there were short verses, it became a problem especially if we did not remember the meaning, because we wanted to go from that verse to the next verse were so many, so did not remember the head of the verse. That was why so far I was okay with juzuk 15, 16, 17 until the beginning of juzuk 18 still okay... But when it comes to juzuk 23, 24, 25.. haa that I have to rememorize it.”* (Participant 5).

“If it was me, the short sentence was a little difficult to remember. Many heads need to remember.” (Participant 7).

Unfamiliarity with Certain Words

Only Participant 4 faced difficulty to recall a certain surah due to its usage of rare words compared to other surahs, *“... Surah Yusuf was difficult.. it was difficult to remember... its verses are not the same, it was a little different from the usual verses of other surahs. Even surah Qasas' verses were okay, a little relaxed. If surah Yusuf, the words used are a little rare.”*

Entertainment

“... Social media also affects. We were addicted to watching dramas which those things that affected me. One more thing, umm songs because I used to really like listening to songs.. the songs that actually did not have benefits.” (Participant 4)

“External challenges..it was gadget, watching Youtube.” (Participant 7)

Entertainment affected both Participant 4 and Participant 7 in sustaining the Quran memorization.

Occupied in Other Activities

Participant 1 stated that one of the difficulties she experienced was being occupied with other activities such as studies, *“When I was at University of Malaysia, Sarawak (UNIMAS) in second year I was quite busy with laboratories et cetera, but not as busy as when I was during matriculation. So, my timetable is full.”*

Another participant also was busy with his study, *“I do not have time...because of learning other knowledge. I took a lot of time reading books, a lot of time learning another knowledge, fekah, nahu, aqidah and what not.. aab another one was busy doing assignment.”* (Participant 6)

Meanwhile, Participant 2 and Participant 5 were occupied with club activities in university, *“Entering this degree, I have a lot of club activities. I was like.. I felt not like I want to memorize it sometimes it felt heavy right. When I entered degree level, many people I met who memorized the Qur’an, but I was the one preoccupied with other things.”*

“When I enrolled in IIUM... because busy with society too.” (Participant 5)

In addition, participant 8 was busy with both study and club activity, *“... Sometimes the whole day I was busy with other things like assignments or the association... until there was no time to do revision.”*

Another participant was working thus did not have the time for memorization, *“If I was in the middle of working like doing Grab I don’t have time (for memorization).”* (Participant 7)

Overcoming the Challenges in Sustaining Qur’anic Memorization

By identifying the challenges that one faced in preserving the memorization of the Qur’an, one could find ways to subdue them. The result of the interview showed that the participants used 13 techniques in overcoming the challenges in sustaining Qur’anic memorization which including: refer back to the Qur’an, tasmī’, recall accustomed surah, relate to a real-life situation, join classes, befriending people that motivate, encouragement from families, rememorize and reflect, spiritual activities, set priorities, self-discipline, weakness as motivation, relax, *tawakkul*, and fixed schedule. **Table 3** shown below summarized the answer of all 7 participants.

Table 3: Participants’ Techniques of Overcoming the Challenges in Sustaining Memorization of the Qur’an

No	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
RQ	✓							✓
AE		✓						✓
R		✓					✓	
RL		✓						
JC		✓		✓				
BM		✓		✓				✓
EF		✓						
RR			✓					
LQ			✓					
SA			✓	✓				
AP				✓				
FI					✓			
FM	✓				✓	✓	✓	

RQ= refer back to the Qur’an, AE= ask someone to examine’, R= recall, RL= relate to real life situation, JC= join religious classes, BM= befriending people that motivate, EF= encouragement from family, RR= rememorize and reflect, LQ= listening to Qur’anic recitation, SA= spiritual activities, AP= aware of priority, FI= forgetfulness as inspiration, FM= fixed schedule for memorization

Refer Back to the Qur'an

Participant 1 stated that if she happened to forget verses of the Qur'an, she would refer back to the Qur'an, *"If I forget like in the prayer, I will open the Qur'an back then, it means we look back. I must know where I want to read, right.. so I opened it again then read the correct verse."*

Participant 8 also referred back to the Qur'an, *"... Usually, if I forget, I refer to the Qur'an back, then in shaa Allah, I can remember."*

Ask Someone to Examine

Participant 2 asked for someone to do tasmī' (examine) her memorization of the Qur'an, *"Kita biasa minta orang tebak.."* Translated: I usually asked someone to examine...

In addition, participant 8 also did the same, *"... If I see my friend as if he is free, I ask him to please listen to my memorization..."*

Recall

Instead of succumbing to laziness and not memorizing anything at all, Participant 2 recalled the common surahs, *"Instead of me not feeling like memorizing because sometimes it feels heavy, so I go back to the surahs where I can pick up back. Like the surahs near the back, the common surahs, the surahs that I usually read, at least I also read and repeat."*

Meanwhile, Participant 7 will try to recall whenever he forgot any verses from the Qur'an especially when it happened during prayers, *"Usually, after rukuk, I tried to recall, then I remembered the verse. After prayer, I revised back."*

Relate to Story or Situation

"Sometimes if there was a story or situation, I can relate to that sentence." (Participant 2)

Verses of the Qur'an could be related to a story or situation to strengthen the memory of the Quranic verses according to Participant 2.

Join Religious Classes

In addition, Participant 2 joined the Quran class in her effort to sustain Qur'anic memorization, *"When I was at CFS, I wanted to overcome the challenge I went looking for a Qur'an class and joined in."*

While Participant 2 joined Qur'an class, Participant 4 engaged in knowledge gatherings to gain momentum in maintaining Qur'anic memorization, *"...What else? Ah, knowledge gathering. Knowledge gathering was not necessarily related to the Qur'an, but anything was possible, it will automatically make us reflect back on our priority, in terms of wanting to regain momentum for revision of the Qur'an back..."*

Befriending People that Motivate

Participant 2 became friends who truly loved the Quran because they make her realized how fortunate she was having memorized the whole Quran at such a young age in secondary school before entering university, *"So I targeted to find friends who like the Quran... Sometimes when I am a little weak-willed I saw a friend of mine, he always.. He does not memorize the Qur'an at school, but he was desperately looking for friends who have*

memorized... I became like 'eh I memorized the Qur'an, but I acted like it was normal even though there are people who wanted to be like me. He was working very hard even though he was at a university he still memorized the Qur'an. Why did I, who already memorized it, but I left it just like that."

Besides, Participant 4 and Participant 8 also make sure that they were in the right circle of friends that could encourage and remind them to maintain memorization of the Qur'an, *"Stay in the trusted circle... If you have found friends who can help in the effort to take care of the heart, the internal, do not let go of them. Keep in track with that person, umm, it does not matter if you have a lot of friends, but this one I did not want to let them go. Because he will remind me 'have you repeated today?'..."* (Participant 4)

"... For me, we have to be in a good atmosphere or bi'ah, I mean be friends with good people. So like the memorization are protected because when we are friends with good people, in shaa Allah there is no feeling like lack of spirit to.. at least this good friend he can help to remind us of if we has not memorize yet..." (Participant 8)

Encouragement from Family

Encouragement or support from family was also important to keep one's spirit in sustaining the memorization of the Quran, *"My mother always, if I go back on holiday, she adviced me not to be futur.. Futur is like we were not thankful for God's favor. We have done all sorts of things but when we did not want it we let it be.. We forgot the blessings of God. My mother reminded me of that. Haa another one my mother always asked like 'ba try to read this surah a little'. She did not force me, she just did it at least .. Because they did not memorize the Qur'an, they did not know what I felt. My mom just touch a little bit about it like just reminding, she did not force me."* (Participant 2)

Participant 2's mother always reminded and advised her to always be grateful to Allah and maintain her Qur'an memorization.

Rememorize and Reflect

Participant 3 stated that she would cry if she forgot any Qur'anic verses and will rememorize and reflect, *"... Crying and thinking 'why I do not remember' like that. After that, just open the Qur'an, try to memorize it again, and thinking why it happened, istighfar because I did not remember."*

Listen to Qur'anic Recitation

Furthermore, when asked what she would do during a long duration of period, participant 3 responded, *"... Mostly during period, I just listen. My mouth moved too as if reading but no sound. Haa so I just listen..."*

Do Spiritual Activities

Due to lack of discipline and determination, participant 3 tried to overcome the challenges with prayers and charities, *"If I was lazy or lack the determination I pray and do solat hajat.. After that, um I donate because, for me, donation purifies the heart or makes things easier. We donate, God promises ease. So, when donating, in shaa Allah, the heart is more open and want to memorize more easily... busy with service to parents, especially if at the house while doing chores, one can listen to the Qur'an and repeat."*

"Selalu istighfar bila tak ingat." "Always istighfar when I forgot." (Participant 4)

Aware of Priority

Participant 4 stated that she tried to be aware of her priority in memorization by limiting usage of social media, *"I tried not to do it. I tried not to use social media, but it was difficult because.. We opened social media for a*

moment and then open the others.. Sometimes it was impossible because we want to use that it a lot. So, I tried to differentiate between what was necessary, which was a priority, which I open because of boredom.”

Forgetfulness as Inspiration

Different from other participants, participant 5 regarded himself as forgetting some verses as inspiration for him to keep his effort in memorization of the Qur'an, *“What inspired me was when I read it I did not remember. If I get one page, I will recite it in the non-obligatory prayers, take 2 to 3 verses... It was very effective because memorizing, a revision was different during prayer and outside of prayers... So, if I succeeded in reciting the verses in prayer for me I think it's done. If I could not remember, I have to repeat it.”*

Fixed Schedule for Memorization

Four of the participants pointed out that they had allocated their schedule either to memorize, read or recite the Qur'an, *“After maghrib in 10 minutes, there must be memorization of the Qur'an.”* (Participant 1)

“I obliged for myself that between maghrib and isyak I have to repeat the page.” (Participant 5)

Following that, Participation 6 and Participation 7 emphasized the significance of a schedule, *“the schedule was every time after prayer I must read the Quran.”* (Participant 6)

“My way was I just set that every time after prayers, there must be a reading of the Quran. Read one or two maqra'.” (Participant 7)

Discussion

The challenges faced by them in maintaining Qur'an memorization

In this study, some of the challenges identified are occupied with other activities, forgetfulness, environmental challenge, mixed up verses, challenge in time management, influence from others, emotional challenge, menstruation, lack of discipline, difficult to remember, unfamiliarity with certain words and entertainment. Challenges such as emotional challenge, lack of discipline, entertainment, difficult to remember, and challenge in time management are parallel with the findings of Sabbri (2016). Other challenges such as forgetfulness, environmental challenge, and mixed-up verses are in line with Zen (1985) stated regarding the problems most *huffaz* faced. Meanwhile, period which is only experienced by females also can be considered as a challenge in the findings stated by Abdullah, Mohamad & Muda (2008), and Anisa (2011).

A study on the method of Qur'anic memorization by understanding its meaning in tahfiz institutions in Alor Setar, Kedah, proposed that students lack an understanding of the meaning of the Qur'an (Baharudin & Sahad, 2020). It seemed to be the same case with some of the graduated secondary leavers that already finished memorizing the Qur'an where some of them still remain unfamiliar with certain words thus making it a challenge for them to sustain memorization.

Overcome the challenges in sustaining Qur'an memorization

Throughout the interview, the researchers managed to identify several approaches they made to overcome the challenges in sustaining memorization of the Qur'an; refer back to the Qur'an, ask someone to examine, recall, relate to story or situation, join religious classes, befriending people that motivate, encouragement from family, rememorize and reflect, listening to Qur'anic recitation, do spiritual activities, aware of priority, forgetfulness as inspiration, tawakkul and fixed schedule for

memorization. Some of the ways they overcame the challenges include the method of memorization, signifying the importance of the method of memorization of the Qur'an.

Approaches such as referring back to the Qur'an, recall and relearn and reflect are in line with the process of Qur'anic memorization (Nawaz & Jahangir, 2015) where it was a constant process of encoding, storing, retrieving, and sustaining the memorization. Besides, the way one of the participants relate the Qur'anic verses to a story or situation can be related to the Levels of Processing Theory (Craik & Lockhart, 1972) in which the stimuli (the verses of the Qur'an) are associated with past knowledge and meaning by the participant. Meanwhile, encouragement from family, joining religious classes, befriending people that motivate, taking forgetfulness as inspiration are some of the means participants did to boost their motivation in preserving Qur'anic memorization. Therefore, motivation plays an important role in sustaining the memorization of the Qur'an.

Implication

Firstly, as the result indicated that recitation is the most applied method among the participant, it should be frequently applied by others who are trying to sustain their memorization of the Qur'an too.

Secondly, the schools should provide a guide for the soon-to-be *huffaz* students on how to sustain memorization even after years of completing the Quran memorization during secondary school. On the other hand, more organization and support groups should be created to aid with memorization between expert *huffaz* and new ones to help each other and share their experience or method in sustaining memorization.

The researchers also suggest that *huffaz* can set aside specific times for memorization. They can also schedule memorization for specific days of the week, for example, Monday for *surah* Al-Baqarah and Tuesday for *surah* Yaasin, if their time is limited and they are engaged in previous obligatory commitments. Even though the most commendable way to memorize is to do it every day, however, for people with commitment in their lives such as time-consuming career, this type of schedule can be negotiated and arranged to ensure manageable handling of time for memorization.

Another idea is to provide a conducive environment for *huffaz* to memorize Qur'anic verses. With the current rising economy, people are bound to move around, hence creating an environment inescapable from noise and disturbance. Specific spaces for memorization can ensure a *huffaz* to try and memorize in peace with minimal disturbance. An example would be an isolated room in a mosque, a separated space in a musolla at the office, a silent corner in a shopping mall, or certain organizations, such as *tahfiz*, can create spaces at certain places where they allow memorization with the guidance of an experienced *huffaz*, or an ustaz, ustazah, imam, or the likes. The spaces can range from rooms to small building lots, to apartment house spaces like the living room, or classrooms in a school or separated at a determined location.

Conclusion

Based on the study carried out, it can be concluded that sustaining memorization is important in preserving memorization of the Qur'an even after completing the Qur'an memorization. Among the challenges they faced are being occupied with other activities, environmental challenge, lack of discipline, forgetfulness, time management, emotion, difficulty in remembering, entertainment, influence from others, mixed up verses, period, and unfamiliarity with certain words. Despite all the challenges, the participants countered them by utilizing several techniques, which some of them can be related to the memorization method of the Qur'an such as referring back to the Qur'an, asking someone to examine, recall, and listening to Qur'an recitation. Other techniques such as joining religious classes, befriending motivating people, encouragement from family, spiritual activities,

awareness of one's priority, forgetfulness as inspiration, fixed schedule, and tawakkal are likely to be related to their etiquettes as *huffaz*.

These findings on the method of sustaining and challenges related to Qur'anic memorization can be a piece of beneficial information and reference for further studies in exploring and to lessening the gap on the method of Qur'anic memorization. Hopefully, this study can be of much help towards other future studies in broadening and elaborating more on the field of research related to the preservation of Qur'anic memorization.

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