

The *Pejuang Subuh* Program as a Model of Qur'anic Literacy and Religious Formation for Children in Mosque-Based Settings

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Abstract. The *Pejuang Subuh* (Dawn Warriors) Program is a community service initiative aimed at strengthening Qur'anic literacy among children and adolescents through regular post-dawn prayer activities at Baitul Makmur Minangkabau Mosque, West Sumatra. This program was developed in response to the declining interest of the younger generation in the Qur'an and their diminishing engagement in mosque activities. The implementation employed a community-based, participatory-educational approach, comprising preparation, daily activities, and periodic evaluation. Participants included children aged 7–15 years, guided by mosque youth serving as facilitators. Core activities encompassed *tilāwah* (Qur'anic recitation), *tahsīn* (recitation improvement), the transmission of Qur'anic moral values, and reflective discussions. The program yielded significant improvements in Qur'anic reading skills, worship discipline, and the development of participants' Islamic character. Moreover, it fostered an inclusive and vibrant mosque atmosphere and enhanced intergenerational participation within the local community. Challenges such as inconsistent attendance, limited facilitators, and varied participant abilities were addressed through adaptive and collaborative strategies. This program has proven to be a best practice model that can be replicated in other mosques with appropriate contextual adjustments. In conclusion, *Pejuang Subuh* is an effective model for nurturing Qur'anic literacy and religious character through simple yet sustainable community-based activities.

Keywords: Qur'anic literacy, mosque, children, community service, *Pejuang Subuh*.

1. Introduction

In recent years, communities across various regions of Indonesia, including in Nagari Minangkabau, West Sumatra, have faced significant challenges in the religious nurturing of the younger generation. This phenomenon is marked by a noticeable decline in the interest of children and adolescents in participating in religious activities at the mosque, such as congregational prayer, Qur'anic learning, and involvement in da'wah initiatives (Setiawati, 2020). In contrast, they tend to be more engaged with digital devices, social media, and online entertainment, resulting in a marginalization of spiritual practices and religious education. Consequently, many young individuals demonstrate a lack of connection with the Qur'an, both in terms of recitation (*tilāwah*) and understanding its values. This situation indicates a weakening of Qur'anic literacy

among children and adolescents, which, if left unaddressed, may have adverse effects on their character development, spirituality, and morality in the future (Hanafi et al., 2022).

This issue is further exacerbated by the suboptimal function of mosques as centers of informal religious education that actively engage youth in the learning process. In many cases, mosques function merely as places of prayer without offering sustained educational programs that attract children and adolescents. This concern is particularly felt by the community of Jorong Badinah Murni, who have observed firsthand the growing disinterest of young people in mosque life. Hence, there is a pressing need for a model of community engagement that not only revives children's religious enthusiasm but also reimagines the mosque as a vibrant, dynamic, and welcoming space for youth.

The urgency of this initiative lies in the importance of rebuilding the younger generation's connection with the Qur'an through relevant and contextual approaches. According to Siti Aminah (2019), Qur'anic literacy has significantly declined among students, mainly due to the shift in learning culture from religious spaces to uncontrolled digital environments. This decline is further evidenced by findings showing that most teenagers are more familiar with entertainment platforms than with the Qur'an. The impact is not limited to diminished recitation skills but also includes a lack of internalization of Qur'anic values in daily life (Munardi et al., 2022).

As the religious institution most closely integrated with the community, the mosque holds great potential to serve as a center for Qur'anic character development – provided it is managed creatively and participatorily (Aziz et al., 2022). However, this potential remains underutilized without the presence of structured programmatic interventions. Therefore, this community service initiative is crucial to fulfill the need for a Qur'anic literacy model that effectively reaches and engages the younger generation in a consistent and meaningful way.

Previous studies on Qur'anic literacy and Qur'an learning have emphasized the importance of *tahfīz* (memorization) and *tahsin* (recitation improvement) as foundational elements in shaping students' religious character. Adril (2025) and Assingkily (2019) demonstrate that a systematic approach to *tahfīz* is effective in building Qur'anic communities, particularly in 3T (underdeveloped, frontier, and outermost) regions and Islamic schools (*madrasah*). Basir et al. (2024) and Prasetyo & Fauzi (2023) further argue that teaching strategies aligned with learners' age and abilities significantly enhance reading fluency. Meanwhile, studies by Supriatna (2025) and Faidah et al. (2023) introduce digitalization as an innovation to boost interest in Qur'an learning, indicating that integrating traditional and technological methods can expand access to Qur'anic literacy.

A number of studies highlight mosques as centers for education and community-based service. Rahmawati et al. (2024) and Hasan & Fajar (2025) assert the strategic role of mosques as non-formal educational institutions. Research by Bachrurrosyady &

Ariyanti (2023) and Dariyanto (2024) shows that mosques can simultaneously facilitate routine religious activities and foster community development. Mosque-based community service programs, as examined by Hamdan et al. (2024) and Shidiq et al. (2025), have been shown to enhance collective spiritual well-being. Moreover, youth leadership in mosques (Aziz et al., 2022; Junanah & Susilo, 2024) plays a crucial role in the success of such community-based initiatives.

Recent studies on contextual approaches and the digital generation underscore the need for innovation in engaging Gen Z. Ahmadi & Huda (2023) emphasize the importance of tailoring Qur'anic literacy approaches to the characteristics of younger generations. Marh & Gusmawati (2024) highlight the significance of intergenerational collaboration in managing mosque-based activities. In addition, community-based literacy movements adapted to local contexts, such as in the study by Khasanah et al. (2024) Khasanah et al. (2024), show that active community involvement can create a dynamic and inclusive ecosystem for Qur'anic learning.

The *Pejuang Subuh* program offers a clear novelty by integrating a daily early-morning routine, youth facilitators, and contextual, adaptive educational methods. Unlike prior studies that focused on schools or formal institutions, this program centers on revitalizing the mosque's role as a consistent, spiritual, and engaging space for early character formation—making it an innovative model worthy of replication.

Nonetheless, most existing Qur'anic literacy programs tend to focus on late-afternoon or evening time slots, with limited attention to dawn (*ṣubḥ*) as a strategic moment for religious development. The *Pejuang Subuh* program offers a novel approach by utilizing the early morning hours—which are often overlooked—as a golden time to instill Qur'anic values from an early age. This program not only encourages the habit of attending dawn prayers in congregation but also includes Qur'anic recitation (*tilāwah*), moral education (*akhlāq*), and motivational reflection sessions.

The main objective of this community engagement program is to strengthen Qur'anic literacy among children and adolescents through the *Pejuang Subuh* program, implemented at Baitul Makmur Minangkabau Mosque. The program is designed not only to improve Qur'anic reading and comprehension skills but also to cultivate worship discipline and foster a deep affection for the mosque as a center of religious nurturing. Using a participatory and enjoyable approach, the program seeks to create a supportive learning environment that encourages the active involvement of children in dawn congregational prayers, followed by sessions focused on Qur'anic values and Islamic ethics. Additionally, the initiative aims to promote collaboration among mosque administrators, parents, and the broader community in fostering a Qur'anic generation in a sustainable manner. Ultimately, the program is expected to produce not only short-term outcomes—such as increased mosque attendance among children—but also long-term religious engagement that could serve as an inspiring model for other mosques.

The distinctiveness of the *Pejuang Subuh* program lies in its strategic use of dawn as a developmental opportunity—an approach rarely optimized in other religious

initiatives. Furthermore, the program employs a reward-based participatory learning model, where simple incentives are given to participants who consistently attend and actively engage. This strategy helps build motivation without relying on coercive or authoritative methods. Program management is carried out collaboratively by mosque youth and adult mentors, enabling intergenerational synergy in mentoring children.

The program also extends beyond Qur'anic recitation by integrating ethical, moral, and character-building values into each session. The learning process is conducted in a dialogical and relaxed atmosphere, ensuring that children feel comfortable and motivated to continue attending mosque activities.

In the long term, the program is expected to significantly strengthen the religious foundation of children from an early age. Regular participation in dawn prayers, Qur'anic reading, and discussions on Islamic values helps build robust spiritual and social character. Participants in the *Pejuang Subuh* program are anticipated to grow into religious, ethical, and socially conscious individuals.

Moreover, the success of this program presents opportunities for replication in other mosques – both urban and rural – by adapting to each local context. Thus, *Pejuang Subuh* is not merely a religious program, but a social movement that revitalizes the mosque's role as a center of civilization, education, and community development in the digital disruption era.

2. Methodolgy

This community engagement program was conducted at Baitul Makmur Mosque, located in Jorong Badinah Murni, Nagari Minangkabau, Sungayang Subdistrict, Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra. The area is predominantly inhabited by Muslims with relatively strong religious enthusiasm. However, the community faces challenges in nurturing the younger generation, particularly in fostering habits of congregational worship and Qur'anic literacy. The target participants of this program were school-aged children and adolescents (ages 7–15) residing in the vicinity of the mosque. Most of them have limited backgrounds in religious education and tend to be less active in mosque-based religious activities. Therefore, structured and engaging intervention programs are urgently needed to enhance their Qur'anic literacy and strengthen their emotional and spiritual attachment to the mosque.

The design of this service program takes the form of a routine educational activity known as *Pejuang Subuh*, conducted daily after the congregational dawn prayer (*ṣubḥ*). The program integrates elements of worship, Qur'anic learning, reinforcement of Islamic moral values, and a reward-based motivational approach. It is conceptualized as an informal, inclusive, participatory, and enjoyable educational setting. Core activities include communal *tilāwah* (recitation), gradual *taḥsīn* (recitation improvement), delivery of Qur'anic moral lessons, and light discussions on ethics and daily life. All sessions are held in the main prayer area of the mosque in a warm, informal, and family-like atmosphere.

The program primarily targets children and adolescents aged 7–15, with an initial participation of 25 individuals, gradually increasing to over 70 participants. In addition to the main participants, the program involves mosque youth serving as facilitators, mosque administrators, and a number of parents who assist with implementation and evaluation. This intergenerational involvement aims to foster a supportive learning environment and strengthen social engagement among mosque community members.

The program is structured into three main phases: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The preparation phase includes coordination with mosque leaders and local community figures, as well as identifying participant needs and characteristics. During this phase, the daily activity schedule, instructional materials, and a motivational reward system were developed. The implementation phase consists of daily post-dawn sessions featuring Qur'anic recitation, reading improvement, thematic lessons on Qur'anic values and morals, and motivational talks. The evaluation phase is conducted periodically to assess participants' development, method effectiveness, and the program's impact on religious behavior. The results of these evaluations inform adjustments to the teaching strategies and content.

The methodological approach used in this program is educational-participatory, emphasizing active engagement of participants in each session and encouraging collaboration among facilitators, parents, and mosque administrators (Rohmawati, 2020). This is combined with a reward-based learning strategy, where children who attend regularly and demonstrate progress receive simple rewards such as pocket money, school supplies, or small gifts. This strategy has proven effective in building positive habits and fostering emotional attachment to mosque activities (Lohrmann & Talerico, 2004). In addition, contextual learning methods are employed by linking Qur'anic values to the everyday experiences of children to enhance understanding and applicability.

The evaluation methods used are both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data include daily attendance records, participation consistency, and progress in memorization or reading proficiency. Qualitative data are collected through behavioral observation, enthusiasm during sessions, and changes in attitudes toward worship and social interaction. Evaluations are carried out by a team of facilitators and mosque administrators, with feedback from parents and community leaders (Badarudin, 2019). These evaluations also inform the development of supplementary programs, such as *"Maghrib Mengaji"* (evening Qur'anic reading) or weekend self-defense training to enhance character development.

The program began in September 2023 and is ongoing as a sustainable community engagement initiative. Activities are held daily, with the main session conducted from 05:30 to 06:15 AM local time, immediately following salat subuh. Evaluations are conducted weekly and monthly to monitor progress and effectiveness, and to plan for further development.

With its structured yet flexible design and approach, the *Pejuang Subuh* program is expected to serve as an effective, context-sensitive, and impactful model of community service in cultivating a generation that is Qur'an-literate, mosque-oriented, and spiritually grounded in Islamic values.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 General Overview of Program Outcomes

The *Pejuang Subuh* program, implemented at Baitul Makmur Mosque in Jorong Badinah Murni, Nagari Minangkabau, has yielded encouraging results since its initiation in September 2023. The program was originally designed as an effort to revive Islamic enthusiasm among children and adolescents, particularly by fostering their connection to the mosque and the Qur'an through routine post-*subh* prayer activities. It emerged in response to a concerning initial situation: most children in the area were not accustomed to attending congregational prayers, especially at dawn. Their mornings were typically occupied with play, school preparation, or returning to sleep after briefly waking up. The mosque functioned solely as a space for adult worship, with little meaningful engagement from the younger generation.

In the early stages of the program, children's participation was still very limited, with only around 10–15 children attending each morning. However, after two to three weeks of implementation and the introduction of a simple reward system—including pocket money, small gifts, and public praise—the number of participants increased significantly. Within the first three months, the number of active participants reached over 50 children, and by the sixth month, it surpassed 70. This surge demonstrates the effectiveness of the program's approach in attracting interest and fostering positive habits. Not only were children encouraged to attend the mosque, but many of them also succeeded in inviting their peers and even family members, including their parents, to join the congregational prayer.

The enthusiasm of the participants was evident not only in attendance numbers but also in the quality of their engagement during each session. After *subuh* prayer, the children would sit in a circle and take turns reciting the Qur'an. They demonstrated curiosity, a strong desire to improve their recitation, and gradually became accustomed to listening to lessons on Islamic moral values. Some showed significant improvement in discipline and responsibility. For instance, children who previously struggled to wake up early became reminders to their parents to go to the mosque. Many of them even took the initiative to help clean the mosque before the activities began.

Community support has also been a strong indicator of the program's success. Parents who initially played passive roles began to provide active encouragement, such as motivating their children at home, preparing prayer attire, or accompanying them to the mosque. Some parents became directly involved in logistical support—providing breakfast, assisting with documentation, or serving as liaisons between mosque administrators and participant families. Their presence and participation strengthened

the communal value of the program, transforming it into not just a children's activity but a spiritual revival for the entire mosque community.

The youth of the mosque, serving as facilitators, also demonstrated notable personal growth. They were not only technical guides but also role models and motivational figures. During *tilāwah* sessions, they patiently mentored their younger peers and modeled proper recitation. In motivational talks, they shared personal spiritual experiences and conveyed Islamic values in a light, engaging manner. This suggests that *Pejuang Subuh* also plays a role in empowering youth as agents of social and religious transformation in their community.

From a management perspective, the program ran with a steady and dynamic rhythm. Activities were consistently scheduled each day for approximately 45–60 minutes after the subuh prayer. The sessions were intentionally designed not to overwhelm the participants, considering their morning school commitments. Although challenges such as weather, fatigue, and school workloads occasionally affected attendance, the program generally succeeded in maintaining consistent engagement. Attendance tracking and weekly evaluations helped the organizing team monitor progress and adjust strategies as needed.

The program's outcomes were also reflected in the evolving social dynamics of the community. The mosque became more vibrant—not only during subuh but also at other prayer times. Children who previously attended sporadically began to show greater consistency, even participating in supplementary activities such as *Maghrib Mengaji* and weekend martial arts training. A mosque that was once quiet and largely occupied by adults transformed into an inclusive space where children felt welcomed, guided, and appreciated.

Overall, these initial results demonstrate that strengthening Qur'anic literacy through a consistent and contextual community-based approach is not only feasible but highly effective—even during time slots traditionally considered less optimal, such as dawn. The increase in both quantity and quality of participation, the involvement of parents, and the contributions of mosque youth indicate that *Pejuang Subuh* is more than just a worship program—it is a platform for character development and social cohesion with far-reaching impact. These outcomes provide a strong foundation for program continuity, expansion, and potential replication in other mosques facing similar needs.

3.2 Impact of the Program on Qur'anic Literacy

The *Pejuang Subuh* program implemented at Baitul Makmur Mosque, Minangkabau, has not only succeeded in attracting children and adolescents to participate in congregational prayer activities but has also demonstrated a tangible impact on their Qur'anic literacy development. In this context, Qur'anic literacy encompasses the ability to read the Qur'an (*tilāwah*), improve pronunciation (*taḥsīn*), comprehend basic meanings, and internalize Qur'anic values into daily behavior. Based on field observations, program documentation, and regular evaluations conducted by the implementation team, the impact of the program on Qur'anic literacy can be

observed across two primary dimensions: (1) improved reading and recitation skills (*tilāwah* and *taḥsīn*), and (2) enhanced understanding and internalization of Qur'anic values in children's everyday lives.

3.2.1 Improvement in *Tilāwah* and *Taḥsīn* Skills

One of the most direct and measurable outcomes of the program is the improvement in Qur'anic reading skills among participants. At the beginning of the program, most children possessed only basic reading skills, and some were unfamiliar with the Arabic alphabet (*ḥijā'iyah*). This presented a significant challenge for the facilitators. However, through a gradual instructional approach—beginning with letter recognition, pronounciation drills, and progressing to verse-level recitation—the children demonstrated significant improvement in reading fluency and accuracy.

Daily *tilāwah* sessions were conducted in rotation, with participants grouped according to their reading proficiency. Beginners received guided instruction from youth facilitators in basic phonetics and syllable construction, while more advanced participants recited one or two verses independently. Within three to four months, several children who were previously unable to read the Qur'an began to fluently recite short chapters such as Al-Fatihah, Al-Ikhlās, and An-Nas with relatively accurate pronounciation. This suggests that consistent and structured exposure, even in brief morning sessions, can yield meaningful progress in Qur'anic literacy.

The aspect of *taḥsīn* (recitation improvement) was also an important focus of the program. Facilitators provided corrective feedback on articulation points (*makhraj*) and basic tajwid rules, including vowel elongation, nasalization (*ghunnah*), and rules concerning *nūn sakīnah* and *mīm sakīnah*. While the *taḥsīn* training was not conducted in a formal *halaqah* style, the approach was appropriate for the children's developmental stage. Delivered in a relaxed, non-judgmental, and enjoyable manner, the sessions motivated children to accept correction and strive to improve. Some participants even sought additional guidance outside the main program hours.

This success was supported by a consistently supportive environment. Because activities were held daily after subuh prayer, the children developed a strong habit of beginning their day with the Qur'an. This fostered spiritual discipline and emotional attachment to the text. Many began bringing their own copies of the Qur'an and treating them with care—an indication that they were beginning to value the Qur'an as an important part of their lives. Over time, the program contributed not only to technical reading proficiency but also to a deeper spiritual bond between participants and the Qur'an.

3.2.2 Strengthening Qur'anic Value Understanding and Internalization

Another significant impact of the *Pejuang Subuh* program is the increased understanding and application of Qur'anic values in participants' daily lives. After each *tilāwah* session, facilitators delivered short lessons on Qur'anic morals, using simple, contextualized language. The content was presented through storytelling, everyday analogies, and interactive discussions involving open-ended questions.

Topics included fundamental ethical values such as honesty, responsibility, helpfulness, respect for parents and teachers, and the importance of prayer. Children were encouraged to reflect on the meanings of the verses or prophetic stories and to provide examples of how these values could be applied at home, in school, or among peers. For instance, during a session on Surah Al-Hujurat: 11 regarding the prohibition of mocking others, facilitators asked whether the children had ever teased someone and how it felt to be teased. Such discussions fostered empathy and helped the children understand the relevance of Qur'anic teachings in real life.

Behavioral changes became evident through improved social interactions. Children began to speak more respectfully to facilitators and peers, and small study groups formed outside of the regular sessions to revise readings or assist each other with memorization. In some cases, parents reported increased discipline at home, greater consistency in daily prayers, and reduced screen time in the morning.

This strengthened understanding of Qur'anic values also contributed to a stronger Islamic identity among participants. The children no longer came to the mosque merely in pursuit of rewards; instead, they began to view worship as a spiritual necessity. During informal weekly evaluations, some participants expressed feelings of happiness and tranquility after attending the sessions and reported pride in their improved Qur'anic reading abilities. These expressions indicate that the program successfully instilled a sense of spiritual awareness, transcending mere ritual participation.

Overall, the impact of the *Pejuang Subuh* program on Qur'anic literacy is evident not only in the technical enhancement of reading skills but also in the moral and behavioral transformation of the participants. The combination of *tilāwah* habituation, *tahsīn* mentoring, value-based instruction, and positive facilitator-participant interactions forms the foundation of the program's success. This also affirms that educational initiatives designed with an engaging and formative approach can effectively cultivate Qur'anic character from an early age, even within limited settings such as post-*ṣubḥ* gatherings.

Given these outcomes, *Pejuang Subuh* has strong potential to serve as a replicable model for Qur'anic literacy development in other mosque-based contexts. With modest adaptation to suit local needs, similar initiatives could be launched to raise a generation that is not only proficient in Qur'anic recitation but also grounded in the ethical values it promotes as guiding principles in life.

3.3 Character Formation and Worship Discipline

One of the key dimensions targeted by the *Pejuang Subuh* program at Baitul Makmur Mosque, Minangkabau, is the formation of Islamic character and the cultivation of worship discipline from an early age. In the perspective of Islamic education, character development is not limited to social morality but also involves spiritual awareness and heartfelt devotion to the commands of Allah SWT. Therefore, the daily post-*ṣubḥ* activities in this program are designed not only to improve Qur'anic literacy

but also to instill an Islamic habitus that becomes an integral part of children's and adolescents' lives.

This program systematically nurtures participants' discipline in worship through three main approaches: habitualization, modelling, and active engagement. These approaches complement and reinforce one another in creating a conducive learning environment for character development. One of the main indicators of this success is the increasing consistency of children in attending congregational Subuh prayers, which has traditionally been the most difficult time to engage children in religious activities.

At the onset of the program, attendance was sporadic and largely dependent on parental encouragement or the child's mood. Children lacked the intrinsic motivation to wake up early and go to the mosque, especially in cold mornings when sleepiness lingered. However, through a consistent and enjoyable approach, along with a simple reward system for regular attendance, a significant change in behavior began to emerge. Within just one month, most participants began to demonstrate personal initiative in waking up early and preparing for the mosque without being reminded. In some cases, children even became motivators for their parents and siblings to not miss the *Ṣubḥ* prayer.

This behavioral change was not merely driven by material incentives but also by a sense of belonging to the program and the mosque environment. The children felt appreciated, heard, and given space to participate. They were not forced to follow rigid rules but were encouraged to understand the meaning of worship and the spiritual values behind it. Facilitators employed a warm, educational, and empathetic communication style, becoming inspiring figures who were emotionally close to the children. During the informal discussions after *tilāwah*, participants were encouraged to ask questions, share experiences, and tell personal stories relevant to the values being discussed.

Beyond prayer discipline, the program also promotes character building through small but consistent practices. Children were trained to be orderly while waiting their turn to read the Qur'an, to listen attentively when others were reading, to help keep the mosque clean, and to assist one another with tasks like arranging prayer mats or organizing Qur'anic texts. While these actions may seem simple, they gradually instill values such as responsibility, cooperation, and concern for the community. Children who were once difficult to manage began showing more structured behavior, not only in the mosque but also at home and school.

Parents also reported positive behavioral changes in their children. Many stated that since joining *Pejuang Subuh*, their children had become more disciplined, woke up earlier, were more helpful with household chores, and were more respectful toward parents and teachers. One parent mentioned that a previously reluctant child had become the one reminding the family to pray. These outcomes demonstrate that the program has had an impact not only on formal acts of worship but also on broader character development and social relations.

The mosque environment itself experienced a transformation. Previously quiet and dominated by adult congregants during Subuh, the mosque became more vibrant, warm, and inclusive. This atmosphere encouraged adult worshippers to also be more attentive to cleanliness, orderliness, and support for the program. The youth facilitators grew in leadership and responsibility, learning how to manage time, organize sessions, deliver material, and engage effectively with children. This process contributed to the development of socially-aware youth, equipped and ready to take on roles within the religious community.

The discipline instilled through the program extended beyond Subuh. Over the course of several months, children began regularly attending Maghrib and Isha prayers, as well as joining other religious activities such as *Maghrib Mengaji*, moral education sessions, and weekend martial arts classes. In other words, the program created a strong entry point into broader religious routines. The mosque became a familiar and welcoming space—a place not only for prayer but also for learning, playing, and growing spiritually. Children no longer saw the mosque as an adult-only space but as a second home that welcomed them daily.

One important indicator of successful character formation is behavioral consistency in the medium term. An evaluation conducted by the implementation team after six months found that around 85% of participants continued attending *Subuh* activities, even after the rewards were no longer the main attraction. Instead, their motivation had shifted toward a desire to learn, meet friends, and enjoy the sense of belonging. Most participants also showed improvement in social skills, such as listening actively, expressing opinions respectfully, and appreciating differences among peers.

Overall, the *Pejuang Subuh* program has proven to be an effective means for instilling Islamic character and worship discipline among children and adolescents. This success is largely attributable to the program's consistent yet simple design, nurturing and empowering approach, and strong community participation. The program does more than fill the early morning hours—it shapes mindsets and behavior grounded in Islamic values. With sustained habituation and modelling, it is hoped that the positive character traits developed will endure into adulthood, nurturing a generation that is Qur'an-oriented, spiritually resilient, and socially engaged.

3.4 Innovation and Method Effectiveness

The success of the *Pejuang Subuh* program cannot be separated from the innovative methods employed in its planning and implementation. In the context of religious development for children and adolescents, conventional approaches such as one-way lectures or rote memorization are often less engaging and misaligned with the characteristics of today's digital generation. One of the key strengths of this program lies in its willingness to adopt a more participatory, enjoyable, and contextual approach without compromising the Islamic values it seeks to impart.

The methods used in *Pejuang Subuh* were designed adaptively, taking into account the developmental stages and habits of early-age participants. The approach

integrates educational-participatory methods, reward-based learning, and contextual-reflective techniques into a cohesive early morning activity package following the *Ṣubḥ* prayer. This methodological innovation has proven effective in increasing children's enthusiasm for coming to the mosque, accelerating Qur'anic learning, and fostering a positive social environment.

One of the most prominent innovations of the program is its choice of the *Ṣubḥ* time for implementation—a time rarely utilized for children's religious activities. Typically, this time is seen as a continuation of rest or school preparation, not a strategic time for development. However, this quiet and spiritually refreshing time offers a unique opportunity for character formation. Children who are accustomed to starting their day with congregational prayer and Qur'anic recitation demonstrate greater discipline and emotional stability. This time innovation also revitalizes mosque activity during previously quiet hours, expanding the mosque's role as a center for early-age development.

Another notable innovation is the use of reward-based learning during the initial phase of the program. Small rewards—such as snacks, pocket money, or symbolic recognition like “Most Active Participant of the Week”—were introduced to cultivate positive habits during the early stages of participation. These rewards were not intended as transactional incentives but as affirmations of desired behavior, encouraging children to internalize routines. This strategy proved highly effective in attracting participation, particularly during the habit-forming stage. While participants initially came for the rewards, over time their motivation evolved into stronger intrinsic drives. As the reward system was gradually phased out, children continued attending voluntarily, having formed emotional bonds and comfort with the activities.

Furthermore, the educational-participatory approach became a core strength of the program. Facilitators did not merely deliver material or lead sessions but invited children to actively engage through reading, asking questions, responding, and sharing personal experiences. During the light discussion sessions following *tilāwah*, facilitators posed reflective questions such as, “Who helped a friend this week?” or “How do you feel when you forget to pray?” These techniques fostered a sense of appreciation and encouraged children to reflect on Islamic values in their own lives. This two-way communication proved far more effective than traditional lecture formats, as it engaged children's cognitive, affective, and social dimensions simultaneously.

Equally important is the contextual-reflective approach used in delivering Qur'anic values. Each week, facilitators introduced a simple theme derived from Qur'anic verses or prophetic stories that related closely to the children's daily experiences. Topics such as honesty, respect, and responsibility were presented through narratives and linked to real-life situations like avoiding cheating, maintaining cleanliness, or helping parents. The material was delivered in simple language, accompanied by stories and occasional light games to maintain enthusiasm. This approach helped make religious messages more relatable and applicable, rather than abstract or burdensome.

From a management perspective, innovation was also evident in the use of structured yet flexible scheduling and groupings based on reading proficiency. Children were divided into small groups according to their Qur'anic reading levels to ensure more targeted guidance. Facilitators adjusted their methods to suit each group's needs—beginners focused on letter recognition and pronunciation, while advanced groups worked on fluency and basic tajwid. Each session was kept concise (around 45–60 minutes) to accommodate school schedules, yet conducted consistently every day to instill routine.

The effectiveness of these methods is evident from several indicators: the number of participants increased from 15 to over 70 within three months; children's Qur'anic reading abilities progressed from beginner to the ability to fluently read short surahs; and there were observable improvements in participants' attitudes and behaviors, as reported by parents and teachers. Additionally, participant attendance remained high even as rewards were gradually reduced, indicating the successful formation of intrinsic motivation. The program also actively involved mosque youth and parents, which contributed to its sustainability and quality.

The success of the methods employed in *Pejuang Subuh* demonstrates the critical importance of innovation in children's religious education. Religious instruction can no longer rely solely on one-way or overly formal delivery models. Instead, it must adapt to children's learning preferences—visual, communicative, and collaborative. With the right approach, Qur'anic values can be more effectively instilled—not only as memorized texts or technical skills but also as guiding principles in children's daily lives.

Overall, the methodological innovations of *Pejuang Subuh* have played a pivotal role in creating an environment for religious development that is both effective and enjoyable. Children do not feel pressured or burdened by the learning process; instead, they find meaningful and joyful spiritual experiences at the mosque. Facilitators act not just as instructors but as companions, role models, and guides in the children's spiritual growth. This success affirms that Qur'anic literacy development and religious character formation are not only achievable outside formal institutions but can be even more impactful when conducted within a dynamic and innovative mosque community.

3.5 Challenges Encountered

Despite the various positive outcomes achieved by the *Pejuang Subuh* program at Baitul Makmur Mosque, Minangkabau, several challenges have also emerged throughout its implementation—ranging from technical and methodological to cultural. These challenges stem from community dynamics, participant characteristics, limited resources, and external conditions beyond the control of the organizers. Although these issues did not hinder the overall continuity of the program, they offered valuable lessons and reflections for future program improvement.

One of the most consistent challenges encountered since the beginning was the issue of timing, as the program is conducted during *Subh* (pre-dawn). This time is highly sensitive, as it coincides with the end of the night's rest and the start of school

preparations. Not all children easily adapted to this schedule, particularly in the early stages. Many participants felt sleepy, had not yet eaten breakfast, or were even forced by their parents to wake up. Conversely, some parents were reluctant to wake their children for fear of exhaustion during school hours. The time limitation also forced facilitators to work more efficiently, ensuring that the activities remained impactful despite being brief. This challenge required the implementing team to gradually adjust their approach to help children develop healthier sleep and morning routines.

Another notable challenge was maintaining consistent participant attendance, especially after the initial excitement had faded. While attendance was high in the early stages—driven by curiosity and the promise of rewards—some participants began losing motivation over time. This decline was influenced by several factors, including fatigue, academic workload, poor weather (particularly during the rainy season), and lack of support from the family environment. Although the average daily attendance remained above 60 participants, the team faced fluctuations that required renewed motivation strategies such as rotating thematic activities, assigning small responsibilities to children, or adopting personal approaches to those showing signs of disengagement.

From a methodological perspective, a significant challenge was the varying levels of Qur'anic literacy among participants. Within a single activity group, there were children who were already fluent, some still learning the Arabic alphabet, and others who had no prior reading skills. This condition compelled facilitators to apply highly adaptive strategies, such as informal grouping and flexible time management. However, due to the limited number of facilitators, attention distribution was sometimes uneven. Advanced students tended to become bored without sufficient challenges, while beginners required more time and intensive guidance. This situation highlighted the need for additional facilitator training and the development of a simplified curriculum with gradual learning stages.

Other challenges included limitations in human resources and logistics. The program relied on voluntary support from youth members of the mosque, mosque administrators, and local community members. While the spirit of collaboration was strong, the number of facilitators was often insufficient, especially when they had overlapping responsibilities with school, university, or work. The lack of supporting personnel sometimes affected the quality of instruction, particularly for participants requiring special attention. Furthermore, logistical support such as Qur'anic texts (*muṣḥaf*), writing materials, visual aids, and basic equipment (speakers, whiteboards, or shelving) remained inadequate. To address this, the team often depended on community contributions and limited donations, which were not always sufficient for sustainable operations.

Cultural and social perceptions also posed a significant challenge, particularly in building awareness about the importance of involving children in mosque-based religious education. While most community members supported the program, some parents and community figures questioned the necessity of involving children in early morning religious activities, viewing it as unconventional or the sole responsibility of

formal schools. To overcome this, the implementation team needed to engage in more intensive communication, educating the community about the importance of communal involvement in children's religious education, and demonstrating the program's tangible impact on children's behavioral changes.

Psychological dynamics of the children also presented distinct challenges. Elementary-aged children have limited attention spans and are easily distracted. Facilitators had to maintain engagement using varied approaches, humor, light games, and visual stimulation to keep sessions enjoyable. Without such variation or content renewal, participants were prone to boredom and disengagement. This demanded continuous innovation—not only in materials but also in delivery methods. The daily rhythm of the program required sustained energy and creativity from facilitators.

Another major challenge was program sustainability and the regeneration of facilitators. Although the program had shown promising results, its sustainability could be at risk without a clear strategy for leadership succession and organizational continuity. Most facilitators were young mosque members who, in time, may move away for higher education or enter the workforce. Therefore, a planned strategy for cadre regeneration was needed, including involving active children as potential future facilitators. This regeneration could be carried out gradually through simple task assignments, mentorship of young facilitators, and assigning greater responsibility to participants who demonstrated leadership potential.

Despite these unavoidable challenges, the implementation team adopted flexible and solution-oriented approaches to address them. These included strengthening communication with parents, building a supportive teamwork environment, maintaining routine documentation, and conducting weekly internal evaluations (Kudus et al., 2024). The presence of strong community support and a shared spirit of collaboration among all mosque stakeholders served as a vital social asset in managing and overcoming the challenges encountered (Udin et al., 2024).

By acknowledging and systematically addressing these challenges, *Pejuang Subuh* has served not only as a platform for religious development but also as a valuable learning space for all parties involved in community-based religious programming. Challenges should not be viewed as obstacles, but rather as stepping stones toward developing more mature, adaptive, and sustainable strategies for nurturing a resilient, Qur'an-literate generation.

3.6 Lessons Learned and Best Practices

Throughout the implementation of the *Pejuang Subuh* program at Baitul Makmur Mosque, Minangkabau, numerous valuable experiences have emerged, serving as important lessons and foundational references for the development of similar initiatives in the future. The program not only had a positive impact on improving Qur'anic literacy among children and adolescents, but also gave rise to several best practices worthy of identification, documentation, and replication by other mosque communities with similar missions.

One of the key lessons learned is the critical importance of consistency and continuity in fostering positive habits and Qur'anic character. Activities held daily, even within a relatively short duration, proved far more effective in shaping the mindset and behavior of children than sporadic large-scale events. This consistency created a spiritually stable environment and became part of the children's daily rhythm. As a result, the activity was no longer perceived as a burden or obligation but as an internal need and a space for self-expression (Supriatna, 2025). Regular routines also allowed for gradual learning processes and cultivated a sense of personal responsibility for worship and Qur'anic reading.

A second major lesson was the urgency of a loving and participatory approach, particularly in informal religious education settings like the mosque. This program demonstrated that children are more easily motivated and develop more holistically when they are actively involved, feel appreciated, and are treated as subjects of learning rather than passive objects. The facilitators' approach—replacing authoritarianism with dialogue, open-ended questioning, and warm guidance—succeeded in creating a comfortable and inclusive learning atmosphere (Sugiarto et al., 2023). Children felt they had a place and a role within the mosque, fostering both a sense of ownership and affection toward the house of worship.

The program also underscored that strengthening Qur'anic literacy must go hand-in-hand with character development. In practice, improvements in the children's Qur'anic reading skills were accompanied by positive behavioral changes both at the mosque and in their home and school environments. They became more disciplined, respectful, responsible, and socially aware. This suggests that effective Qur'anic education does not merely produce technically proficient reciters, but also cultivates individuals who understand and embody its values in everyday life (Hamdan et al., 2024). Consequently, the integrative approach that combines *tilāwah* (recitation) with ethical and moral education represents a best practice worthy of broader adoption.

From a management perspective, a notable best practice was the implementation of a simple yet meaningful reward system. The use of small symbolic gifts or public recognition (e.g., "Most Diligent Participant of the Week") proved highly effective in motivating participants, especially during the initial phase of engagement. Importantly, the reward system was not transactional or materialistic in nature but served as affirmation of the behavioral changes being cultivated. This strategy successfully encouraged the gradual formation of intrinsic motivation, with children continuing to attend even after rewards were phased out—driven by emotional bonds and enjoyment of the program. It demonstrated that when rewards are given in a value-based, affectionate context, they can be powerful educational tools.

The program further demonstrated that collaboration among various community elements—including youth groups, mosque management, parents, and community leaders—is essential to successful child development initiatives. Religious activities for children cannot thrive when left solely to one party. In *Pejuang Subuh*, the involvement of mosque youth as facilitators, mosque administrators as mentors, and parents as moral

supporters played a pivotal role in the program's success. This intergenerational collaboration created a harmonious nurturing environment embedded within the community's social fabric and fostered a collective sense of ownership that helped sustain the program.

In terms of curriculum, another best practice was the development of simple and contextualized thematic content. Facilitators designed weekly themes based on Qur'anic values relevant to children's everyday lives, such as honesty, compassion, responsibility, and modesty. These themes were delivered through storytelling, light discussions, Q&A sessions, or educational games. This approach helped children not only understand the concepts intellectually but also internalize them emotionally. They were able to connect Islamic messages with personal experiences and adopt them as behavioral guides.

Another significant best practice was the development of young facilitators from among the mosque's youth, ensuring the program's sustainability. These youth were not merely assigned as technical organizers but were trained to be mentors, discussion leaders, and peer coaches for younger participants. This process nurtured early religious and social leadership while preparing a new generation of mosque leaders. The youth facilitator model has proven effective in sustaining activities while developing adolescents as agents of change in their communities.

An important takeaway from the program is that information technology does not always need to be the primary tool in child education—especially in early-morning programs focused on simplicity and spiritual calmness. *Pejuang Subuh* thrived without significant reliance on digital media. Visual aids were used minimally, with greater emphasis placed on direct interaction and warm verbal communication. This demonstrated that togetherness, consistency, and exemplary conduct can be more powerful than technological sophistication in spiritual education.

Lastly, a vital lesson from the program is that mosque-based community service initiatives are highly feasible, even with limited resources, as long as there is strong intention, careful planning, and a collaborative spirit. *Pejuang Subuh* is not a large-scale or heavily funded program. It was born from real community needs, run through collective effort, and grew through a sense of ownership and care among community members. This embodies the essence of community engagement in Islam—simple, grounded, yet with profound and far-reaching impact.

By reflecting on these key lessons and best practices, it can be concluded that *Pejuang Subuh* has contributed significantly to shaping a contextualized, participatory, and sustainable model of Qur'anic education. The program not only offers a reference for local communities but also serves as a replicable model for other regions aiming to raise a resilient, mosque-loving, and Qur'an-centered generation.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of the *Pejuang Subuh* program at Baitul Makmur Mosque, Minangkabau, demonstrates that a Qur'anic literacy initiative designed with

participatory, contextual, and consistent approaches can significantly impact the spiritual development and character formation of children and adolescents. The program not only enhanced their ability to read and improve their recitation of the Qur'an (*tilāwah* and *taḥsīn*), but also instilled Islamic moral values through friendly, communicative, and experience-based learning methods. Improvements in worship consistency, positive behavioral changes, and active participation from both participants and the community serve as strong indicators of the program's success.

Innovative methodological approaches – such as utilizing the dawn prayer time as a space for character development, implementing a reward system based on internal motivation, and empowering mosque youth as facilitators – demonstrate that non-formal, mosque-based religious education can be carried out effectively even with limited resources. Challenges encountered during implementation, such as fluctuating attendance, limited human resources, and varying participant abilities, were successfully addressed through adaptive strategies, open communication, and collaborative support among community stakeholders.

The *Pejuang Subuh* program stands as a tangible model of community service that responds to local needs and holds strong potential for wider replication. Its success lies in the strength of communal engagement, the sustainability of daily activities, and an educational orientation that goes beyond technical instruction to address the spiritual, social, and emotional dimensions of participants' development.

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