

DETERMINANTS OF QURANIC RECITATION PROFICIENCY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FROM NON-ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUNDS

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Abstract. Proficiency of Quran recitation reflects not just a technical ability but also a commitment to maintain the authenticity and beauty of the holy scripture. However, limited fluency in Arabic phonetics, poor access to systematic tajwid training, and varied degrees of enthusiasm are among the major obstacles university students with a non-Islamic educational background must overcome to reach Quranic recitation proficiency. The objective of this study is to identify the primary determinants of Quranic recitation proficiency among university students with a non-Islamic educational background. This study employs a quantitative survey design to investigate the determinants of Quran recitation proficiency among university students with a non-Islamic educational background. In conclusion, this study shows that mastery of tajwid rules is the main factor influencing Quran reciting skill among university students with a non-Islamic background. Future studies should investigate other elements affecting proficiency, including students' motivation, past Arabic experience, or frequency of recitation practice, to build a more complete understanding based on these results.

Keywords: *Quranic recitation, proficiency, university students, non-Islamic educational background, Islamic education, Quranic literacy*

Introduction

Proficiency of Quran recitation reflects not just a technical ability but also a commitment to maintain the authenticity and beauty of the holy scripture. It guarantees proper articulation and rhythm in every verse by means of constant practice under competent tutors and strong knowledge of the norms of tajweed. Proficiency in recitation enhances spiritual awareness and creates a closer emotional connection with the Quran, therefore improving its transforming power on the life of the reciter (Hasim et al., 2023). Furthermore, inadequate attention to appropriate recitation can cause one to lose the profound meaning of the Quran, so educational reinforcement of proficiency becomes even more important in Islamic education (Kipayatu Allah et al., 2020). Effective recitation improves community worship experiences as well since accurate and melodic delivery can inspire and emotionally move listeners during prayers and religious events. Beyond the spiritual sphere, increasing fluency in recitation at a young age has been connected to enhanced memory retention and academic performance, therefore showing benefits (Munzir, 2023). However, limited fluency in Arabic phonetics, poor access to systematic tajwid training, and varied degrees of enthusiasm are among the major obstacles university students with a non-Islamic educational background must overcome to reach Quranic recitation proficiency (Nasirudin et al., 2024). These difficulties often impede their capacity to faithfully and fluently memorise the Quran, thereby lowering their interaction with Islamic activities (Fard et al., 2024). Research already in publication usually concentrates on students inside Islamic

educational systems, therefore neglecting the particular demands of non-traditional learners (Ismail et al., 2024). This research gap highlights the need to investigate personalised teaching strategies. These students might struggle to overcome recitation difficulties without focused treatments. Developing effective educational solutions may be challenging without targeted studies to identify proficiency drivers in this population, necessitating specialised research.

The objective of this study is to identify the primary determinants of Quranic recitation proficiency among university students with a non-Islamic educational background. This study looks at their recognition of tajwid rules, letter traits, makhraj, Quranic diacritics and recitation marks. By identifying these elements, organised and ongoing tutoring for Quran recitation greatly improves students' capacity to read and understand the Quran (Sholihan and Shalehati, 2024). The benefits include giving teachers evidence-based techniques to increase the efficacy of their instruction, so fostering inclusivity in Islamic education, and enabling non-traditional students to boldly participate with Quranic recitation, thus enhancing their spiritual and cultural experiences. These results can inspire more general involvement in Quranic education among many different groups. The results could inspire innovative tools such as digital learning platforms to enhance proficiency development.

Review of past research

Recent studies have looked at how well students from different backgrounds recite the Quran. Studies reveal that although male and female students show clear differences, students generally show only minor degrees of ability in Quranic recitation (Dasrizal, 2020). While issues including teaching methodologies and cultural sensitivity have to be addressed, motivating factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic, play a vital part in developing reciting skills (Salma et al., 2022). Children's Quranic reading ability is affected by their educational experience; those from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah show extraordinary fluency, correct pronunciation (makharijul huruf), and adherence to tajwid standards compared to students from public elementary schools (Ibrahim, 2023). Still, regardless of their level of education, students often exhibit remarkable eagerness to learn Quranic recitation (Nik Abdullah et al., 2021). These findings underscore the importance of tailored teaching strategies, personalised learning methods, and community involvement in improving Quranic education and enhancing a closer link with Islamic heritage (Dzulkifli et al., 2021). Moreover, knowing these elements enables one to understand that students without a traditional Islamic background could have specific challenges obtaining the necessary fluency and accuracy in recitation. One important factor is the will to stay involved in Quran recitation and learning. Studies in Islamic education have long shown how much reciter performance is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivating elements (Ramli and Syed Salim, 2020). In a non-traditional environment, where students may not have been exposed to formal education in Quranic recitation during their earlier education, the absence of an established motivating framework may contribute to lower initial proficiency levels. Studies have shown that when students receive culturally sensitive and interactive education, their motivation improves, which enhances their overall proficiency. Complementing motivating elements, good teaching strategies are absolutely vital. Specialised educational approaches, such as the Focused Mad and Idgham (FMI) technique, have been shown to improve understanding and confidence in recitation (Sahmat and Zamri, 2024). This approach emphasises the need for organised teaching strategies that might

be especially helpful for university students from a non-Islamic background who might not have been previously exposed to the complexities of tajwid rules. Furthermore, classroom innovations, including the flipped classroom model, point to similarities in involving students in active learning and cognitive participation that could be fit for Quranic education (Rachmawati et al., 2023).

Crucially, there are also psychological and cognitive factors. A crucial cognitive ability needed for the proper recitation of Quranic verses, attention power has been found to be much improved by cognitive therapies, including audio therapy with Quran recitation (Zaidah et al., 2023). Better concentration helps the student to keep the required focus throughout practice and absorb difficult recitation patterns. Therefore, for non-Islamic educational-background students who might lack the habitual attention connected with conventional recitation techniques, such interventions might offer a significant means of increasing their level of proficiency. Apart from these elements, technology developments help to improve learning effectiveness. Automated systems for identifying and reporting on Quranic recitation rules (tajwid) present a means to guarantee adherence to appropriate reciter patterns and fix pronunciation mistakes (Alvindo et al., 2024). For students who do not have easy access to professional human advice, these technologies could especially help as they offer instantaneous, objective feedback. This technology intervention can function as an equaliser in settings where students' cultural and educational backgrounds do not include early exposure to certain reciting criteria. Ultimately, even though the literature that has been surveyed mostly addresses settings inside Islamic educational institutions, many of the factors found: motivation, creative teaching strategies, cognitive improvements, and technological support; are equally pertinent when considering university students with non-Islamic backgrounds. Lack of prior experience with Quranic recitation calls for customised treatments that take into account sociocultural changes as well as the cognitive elements of learning new abilities. These factors would most certainly show that effective Quran recitation proficiency in this particular student population depends critically on the adaptation of proven techniques from motivational enhancement (Anoum et al., 2022) to pedagogical innovations (Nazliati et al., 2024) and technological supports (Alsulami et al., 2024).

Materials and Methods

This study employs a quantitative survey design to investigate the determinants of Quran recitation proficiency among university students with a non-Islamic educational background. Conducted at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Campus of Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia, the research targets students from the faculties of Health Sciences and Art and Design. This study gathered data via an online questionnaire and then supplemented it with Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics for analysis. To find main predictors of Quranic recitation proficiency, the study outlines participant selection, data collection methods, questionnaire content design, and data analysis techniques. Selected by simple random sampling to ensure an objective representation of students with a non-Islamic educational background, this study comprised a group sample of university students from the faculties of Health Sciences and Art and Design (n=71). From university records, a thorough list of undergraduates from these departments was obtained; participants were chosen at random using a random number generator to satisfy the necessary sample count. The inclusion standards followed these:

Undergraduates enrolled in health sciences or art and design programs; self-reported ability to read the Quran, regardless of proficiency level; and voluntary willingness to participate. Those who were not active students (e.g., those who had withdrawn or graduated); those on special leave (e.g., medical or personal leave); those who were unable to read the Quran; and those who were reluctant to give informed permission were excluded from the study. This criteria ensured alignment with the study's focus on active students.

For purposes of accessibility and convenience, data were gathered using an online questionnaire hosted in Google Forms. With a two-week response period in March 2025, the questionnaire was sent by email and faculty correspondence lines. Before answering the questionnaire, which took 15 to 20 minutes, participants gave electronic informed consent. The tool comprised items gauging Quranic recitation competency and related skills as well as demographic questions, including age, gender, and faculty. Available in Malay with explicit instructions, the questionnaire guaranteed anonymity to encourage honest answers. Based on established constructs in Quranic recitation studies, the questionnaire was meant to measure the dependent variable and predictors of Quran recitation proficiency assessed using a 5-point Likert scale (1=Not Proficient, 5=Highly Proficient) across items evaluating fluency, accuracy, and adherence to recitation rules. The material's organisation of dependent variables and predictors is the following (*Table 1*): (1) Dependent Variable: The dependent variable is found to be the level of proficient Quran reading. The following were identified as predictors: (a) the ability to recognise the rhythms of tarannum recitation was measured through items assessing familiarity with tarannum styles; (b) the ability to recognise letter categories and types was evaluated with items on identifying Arabic letter forms and properties; (c) the ability to recognise Quranic diacritics and recitation marks was assessed through items on understanding diacritics (e.g., fathah, kasrah) and symbols (e.g., sukun, shaddah); (d) the ability to recognise recitation rules and tajwid was measured with items on tajwid knowledge; and (e) the ability to recognise letter characteristics and makhraj was evaluated through items on articulation points. (2) Predictors: Each predictor was assessed with 4–6 items to ensure comprehensive coverage. The predictors are summarised in Table 1, below. The questionnaire was pilot-tested to confirm clarity and reliability. A Cronbach's alpha reliability test conducted on the pilot data yielded a value of 0.802, indicating excellent internal consistency, as values above 0.7 are considered reliable for survey instruments.

Table 1. Predictors of Quran recitation proficiency.

Predictor	Code	Description	References
Quranic letter categories and types	B1	Understanding the phonetic categories and types of Quranic letters is essential for accurate recitation, as mispronunciation can alter meanings and compromise the integrity of Quranic delivery.	Yusuff et al. (2024)
Quranic diacritics and recitation marks	B2	Diacritics and recitation symbols in the Quran guide proper pronunciation, pauses, elongations, and stops, forming a foundational element of <i>tajwid</i> instruction.	Wiwin and Budi (2021)
Quranic letter characteristics and makhraj	B3	Mastery of <i>makhraj</i> (articulation points) in tandem with understanding the attributes of Quranic letters ensures phonetic precision in recitation.	Mohamed et al. (2024)
Quranic recitation rules and tajwid	B4	<i>Tajwid</i> encompasses rules governing pronunciation, intonation, and modulation of Quranic verses to preserve the recitation's spiritual and linguistic accuracy.	Omran et al. (2023)
Quranic rhythms recitation and tarannum	B5	<i>Tarannum</i> refers to the melodic recitation of the Quran, aligning rhythmic patterns with emotional and spiritual expression during recitation.	Al-Issa et al. (2022)

IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27) conducted the primary statistical analysis on the collected data, with Microsoft Excel providing support for data cleaning and visualisation. Descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies and percentages) summarise participants' demographic characteristics and questionnaire responses. Multiple regression analysis examined the relationship between the dependent variable (ability to read the Quran proficiently) and the five predictors, assessing their individual and collective contributions. The regression model included the constant. Significance was set at $p < .05$, and R^2 and adjusted R^2 were reported to indicate variance explained. Microsoft Excel was used to create a chart for descriptive results.

Results and Discussion

The results of descriptive statistics in *Table 2* show the sample responded to five factors that affect their Quranic recitation skills, measured on a 5-point scale (1=Not Proficient, 5=Highly Proficient). The table reveals that B1 (recognition ability of Quranic letter categories and types) had the best scores, with 71.8% of students rating it a 5 and 28.2% rating it a 4, indicating they are excellent at recognising Arabic letter forms. The table indicates that B1 (recognition ability of Quranic letter categories and types) exhibited the highest proficiency, with 71.8% (n=51) rating it at 5 and 28.2% (n=2) at 4, suggesting strong ability to recognise Arabic letter forms. B2 (recognition ability of Quranic diacritics and recitation marks) also demonstrated high proficiency, with 53.5% (n=38) at 4 and 39.4% (n=28) at 5. In contrast, B3 (recognition ability of Quranic letter characteristics and makhraj) showed a more varied distribution, with 56.3% (n=4) at 4, 22.5% (n=16) at 5, and 19.7% (n=14) at 3, indicating moderate proficiency. B4 (recognition ability of Quranic recitation rules and tajwid) and B5 (recognition ability of Quranic rhythms recitation and tarannum) had lower proficiency levels, with 35.2% (n=25) and 62% (n=44) at 4, respectively, but significant proportions at 3 (35.2% for B4, 25.4% for B5) and lower ratings (e.g., 9.9% at 5 for B4, 8.5% for B5), highlighting challenges in mastering Quranic tajwid and tarannum amongst the sample. As the multiple linear regression analysis, it was conducted to investigate the relationship between the ability to read the Quran fluently (dependent variable) and five predictor variables, which are recognition ability of: (a) Quranic rhythms of tarannum recitation; (b) Quranic letter categories and types; (c) Quranic diacritics and recitation marks; (d) Quranic recitation rules and tajwid; and (e) Quranic letter characteristics and makhraj.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) of the predictors of Quranic recitation proficiency.

Likert scale	B1		B2		B3		B4		B5	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.4	2	2.8
2	0	0	0	0	1	1.4	2	2.8	1	1.4
3	0	0	5	7	14	19.7	25	35.2	18	25.4
4	2	28.2	38	53.5	4	56.3	36	5.7	44	62.
5	51	71.8	28	39.4	16	22.5	7	9.9	6	8.5

For the model summary, the regression model was statistically significant, $F(5, 65)=17.152$, $p < .001$, indicating that the predictors collectively accounted for a significant portion of the variance in Quran recitation proficiency. The model explained

56.9% of the variance in the dependent variable, as indicated by $R^2=.569$, with an adjusted $R^2=.536$. The standard error of the estimate was .475, suggesting a moderate level of prediction error. The ANOVA results confirmed the overall significance of the model, with a regression sum of squares of 19.341 and a residual sum of squares of 14.659, yielding a total sum of squares of 34.0. The mean square for the regression was 3.868, compared to .226 for the residual, resulting in $F(5, 65)=17.152$, $p<.001$. The coefficients of the regression analysis revealed varying contributions from the predictor variables. The constant had an unstandardised coefficient of $B=-0.064$ ($SE=0.614$, $t=-0.105$, $p=.917$). The recognition ability of Quranic letter categories and types yielded $B=0.272$ ($SE=0.146$, $\beta=.177$, $t=1.863$, $p=.067$), approaching significance. The recognition ability of Quranic diacritics and recitation marks produced $B=0.170$ ($SE=0.123$, $\beta=.147$, $t=1.387$, $p=.170$). The recognition ability of Quranic letter characteristics and makhraj resulted in $B=0.252$ ($SE=0.139$, $\beta=.274$, $t=1.818$, $p=.074$), also approaching significance. The recognition ability of Quranic recitation rules and tajwid was significant, with $B=0.325$ ($SE=0.126$, $\beta=.354$, $t=2.569$, $p=.013$), indicating the strongest relative contribution to Quran recitation proficiency. Finally, the recognition ability of Quranic rhythms of tarannum recitation showed $B=-0.028$ ($SE=0.084$, $\beta=-.036$, $t=-0.334$, $p=.739$), with no significant effect. The regression analysis can be referred to in the following *Table 3* to *Table 5*.

Table 3. The multiple linear regression analysis: Model summary.

R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the estimate
.754 ^a	.569	.536	.475

Table 4. The multiple linear regression analysis: ANOVA^a.

Category	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	19.341	5	3.868	17.152	.000 ^b
Residual	14.659	65	.226		
Total	34.000	70			

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Ability to read the Quran proficiently; b. Predictors: (Constant), recognition ability of: (a) Quranic rhythms of tarannum recitation; (b) Quranic letter categories and types; (c) Quranic diacritics and recitation marks; (d) Quranic recitation rules and tajwid; and (e) Quranic letter characteristics and makhraj.

Table 5. The multiple linear regression analysis: Coefficients^a.

Category	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.064	.614		-.105	.917
Quranic letter categories and types	.272	.146	.177	1.863	.067
Quranic diacritics and recitation marks	.170	.123	.147	1.387	.170
Quranic letter characteristics and makhraj	.252	.139	.274	1.818	.074
Quranic recitation rules and tajwid	.325	.126	.354	2.569	.013
Quranic rhythms recitation and tarannum	-.028	.084	-.036	-.334	.739

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Ability to read the Quran proficiently; b. Predictors: (Constant), recognition ability of: (a) Quranic rhythms of tarannum recitation; (b) Quranic letter categories and types; (c) Quranic diacritics and recitation marks; (d) Quranic recitation rules and tajwid; and (e) Quranic letter characteristics and makhraj.

The findings suggest that the recognition ability of Quranic recitation rules and tajwid is a significant predictor of Quran recitation proficiency, while the other predictors, recognition ability of Quranic letter categories and types, diacritics and

recitation marks, letter characteristics and makhraj, and rhythms recitation and tarannum, may contribute to the model but lack individual significance in this sample. The model accounts for a substantial portion of the variance in proficiency; however, future research could explore additional predictors or larger samples to enhance predictive accuracy. These results highlight the pivotal role of tajwid in achieving fluent and accurate Quranic recitation, underscoring its importance for non-traditional learners. The limited significance of other variables implies that mastery of recitation rules may be the main determinant of performance, which could direct focused instructional initiatives. This focus on tajwid fits its well-known function in Quranic studies and opens the path for a closer study of its elements and pedagogical consequences. Considered a main determinant of Quran recitation performance, the integration of Quranic reciting rules, collectively known as tajwid, is extensively acknowledged. Mastery of tajwid gives reciters ordered instructions to adequately articulate Arabic letters and elongated vowels, therefore guaranteeing clarity and accuracy in recitation (Sabrina et al., 2022). Studies have revealed, for instance, that students who closely follow tajwid concepts show superior memorisation speeds and pronunciation accuracy compared to those who repeat without such direction (Al-Fadhli et al., 2023). This correlation suggests that the cognitive benefits of using tajwid transcend basic memorisation and significantly increase fluency and reciting speed.

Early childhood techniques of Tartila and Tahsin are part of pedagogical programmes; Islamic studies surroundings reinforce the relevance of tajwid in recitation abilities even further. Emphasising the proper application of tajwid rules, the Tartila technique encourages slow, rhythmic, and deliberate recitation, hence raising reading literacy among young students (Widyawati and Nurhayati, 2023). Programmes applying the Tahsin method similarly focus on accurate pronunciation of hijaiyah letters by making sure students practice with a thorough awareness of makharij (articulation points) and prolongation rules, so improving the quality and proficiency of the recitation (Nadlir et al., 2024). In boarding school situations, structured recitation methods, including verification approaches, have similarly shown noteworthy increases in recitation accuracy and general proficiency (Ibnu et al., 2023). Moreover, the evaluation of Quranic recitation using modern technical devices provides empirical data for the purpose of tajwid. Variations in articulation can be quantitatively linked to deviations from advised tajwid guidelines, underlining the predictive ability of tajwid knowledge on recitation proficiency using Mel-Frequency Cepstral Coefficients (MFCC) techniques. Targeted recitation programmes, such as the Tashih Recitations of the Quran Programme, have been especially linked to improved readings among Islamic studies students, which underlines the importance of structured correction and guided practice based on tajwid principles in reaching proficiency (Afriandi et al., 2023). Furthermore, higher education initiatives also show the need for suitable reciting guidelines since a focus on tajwid corresponds with better confidence and performance among reciters (Azhari and Nuddin, 2024). Moreover, using methods like the Qiro'ati approach (Husna et al., 2023) combined with extensive training on tajwid considerably increases the accuracy and flow of Quranic recitations. Therefore, strong training in tajwid thus not only supports the mechanical elements of recitation via appropriate letter enunciation and application of pauses but also increases the general proficiency and aesthetic quality of recitation, so putting it as a primary predictor of proficient in Quranic recitation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study shows that mastery of tajwid rules is the main factor influencing Quran reciting skill among university students with a non-Islamic background. Although awareness of letter traits (makhraj), Quranic diacritics, and recitation marks also helps, tajwid's central importance emphasises its need for proper and clear recitation. Future studies should investigate other elements affecting proficiency, including students' motivation, past Arabic experience, or frequency of recitation practice, to build a more complete understanding based on these results. Examining the success of particular educational techniques such as peer-based learning or technology-assisted tajwid training may improve teaching plans even further. Furthermore, broadening the sample to include various populations, such as younger students or those from other cultural backgrounds, would increase the generalisability of the findings and guide customised instructional programmes.

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Conflict of interest

The author confirms that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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