

Differentiated Instruction in Qur'an Memorization Programs: A Qualitative Study in an Islamic Junior High School in Jakarta

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ABSTRACT

Student diversity in Qur'an memorization programs presents significant challenges for teachers, as differences in memorization ability, learning pace, and psychological readiness often make standardized instructional approaches ineffective. Although differentiated instruction has demonstrated positive impacts across various educational contexts, empirical evidence regarding its implementation in Tahfidz education remains limited. This study aimed to explore how differentiated instruction is implemented in the Tahfidz Qur'an program at Al-Qalam Junior High School, Jakarta, with particular attention to instructional strategies, supporting and inhibiting factors, and students' learning experiences. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design involving 25 participants, including the school principal, Tahfidz teachers, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the Tahfidz program. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis over a three-month period. The data were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis, while the trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through triangulation, member checking, reflexive field notes, and audit trails. The findings reveal that differentiated instruction was implemented through tiered *halaqah* grouping, flexible memorization targets, differentiated *muraja'ah* practices, personalized instructional guidance, and adaptive assessment. These strategies enabled teachers to accommodate students' diverse learning needs while improving memorization quality, motivation, engagement, and learning persistence. The effectiveness of implementation was further supported by collaborative relationships among teachers, students, and parents, although challenges remained regarding teacher workload, instructional preparation, and institutional support. This study demonstrates that differentiated instruction functions as an integrated pedagogical approach that promotes adaptive, equitable, and student-centered Tahfidz learning. The findings extend differentiated instruction theory into memorization-based Islamic education and provide practical implications for designing more inclusive and sustainable Qur'an memorization programs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing diversity of students' academic readiness, learning pace, and cognitive characteristics has challenged educators to move beyond standardized instructional practices toward more responsive pedagogical approaches. Contemporary educational theory recognizes that effective teaching cannot rely on uniform learning experiences because students differ substantially in their abilities, interests, motivations, and prior knowledge. Consequently, differentiated instruction has emerged as one of the most influential pedagogical frameworks for addressing learner diversity by systematically adapting instructional content, learning processes, expected products, and classroom environments according to students' individual needs (Tomlinson & Strickland, 2021). Numerous studies have demonstrated that differentiated instruction contributes positively to students' academic achievement, motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy across various educational settings (Eikeland & Ohna, 2022). Rather than lowering learning standards, differentiation seeks to provide equitable learning opportunities by enabling every learner to achieve common educational goals through instructional pathways that correspond to their readiness and potential.

Within Islamic education, learner diversity presents equally significant challenges, particularly in Qur'an memorization (Tahfidz) programs, where students are expected to attain mastery through continuous memorization, repetition, and retention. Memorization-based learning requires sustained cognitive concentration, emotional resilience, and consistent motivation, yet students enter Tahfidz programs with highly diverse memorization abilities, learning speeds, psychological readiness, and family support. Despite these differences, many Tahfidz institutions continue to implement relatively standardized instructional practices, including identical memorization targets, fixed *muraja'ah* schedules, and uniform evaluation systems for all learners. Such "one-size-fits-all" approaches often fail to accommodate individual differences and may inadvertently reduce students' motivation, increase learning anxiety, and widen achievement disparities among learners (Baidowi et al., 2025; Izzah et al., 2024). As Islamic education increasingly emphasizes inclusive and student-centered learning, the adoption of differentiated instructional practices becomes both pedagogically relevant and educationally necessary.

Previous research has consistently reported the positive influence of differentiated instruction on student learning outcomes in general education. Studies conducted in elementary and secondary schools demonstrate that differentiation enhances academic performance, classroom participation, learning motivation, and student engagement by allowing teachers to adjust instructional strategies according to learners' readiness and interests (Agusta et al., 2024; Maradona & Eliza, 2025; Ramdhani et al., 2024). Similarly, within Islamic Religious Education (PAI), adaptive instructional approaches have been shown to improve learning quality when teachers possess sufficient pedagogical competence to recognize and accommodate students' individual differences (Murtyaningsih et al., 2025; Rahmanto & Bunyamin, 2020). These findings support the broader educational perspective that instructional flexibility represents a critical component of equitable and meaningful learning experiences.

Nevertheless, the existing literature remains concentrated primarily on classroom-based instruction in general education, while empirical investigations into differentiated instruction within memorization-oriented Islamic education remain relatively limited. Most Tahfidz studies continue to focus on memorization methods, institutional program evaluation, teacher competence, or character development rather than examining how differentiated pedagogy can systematically accommodate learner diversity throughout the memorization process (Alwi et al., 2023; Isnawati & Hudha, 2024). Consequently, important pedagogical questions remain insufficiently addressed, including how teachers adapt memorization targets according to students' readiness, how *muraja'ah* activities are differentiated to support varying retention capacities, how ability-based *halaqah* grouping influences learning progression, and how adaptive assessment contributes to memorization quality. The absence of empirical evidence addressing these issues represents a significant gap in contemporary Islamic education literature.

The implementation of differentiated instruction within Tahfidz education also presents substantial practical challenges. Successful differentiation requires teachers to continuously assess students' learning readiness, modify instructional materials, manage heterogeneous classrooms, and provide individualized feedback without compromising curriculum expectations. Previous studies indicate that inadequate teacher preparation, limited institutional support, insufficient professional development, and administrative workloads frequently hinder the implementation of differentiation in educational practice (Anshori, 2025; Erdiana, n.d.; Sukardi & Inayati, 2024). These challenges are likely to become even more complex within Qur'an memorization programs because teachers must simultaneously monitor memorization accuracy, retention consistency, *tajwid* mastery, and students' emotional well-being throughout prolonged learning processes. Therefore, understanding how differentiated instruction operates within authentic Tahfidz settings is essential for informing both educational practice and future policy development.

From a theoretical perspective, differentiated instruction aligns closely with Islamic educational principles emphasizing justice (*'adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), and the recognition of individual human potential. Islamic pedagogy acknowledges that learners possess different capacities and developmental trajectories, requiring educators to facilitate learning according to students' abilities while maintaining educational excellence. This perspective is also consistent with contemporary theories of learner-centered education, which position diversity as an educational resource rather than a pedagogical obstacle (Chen, 2020; Nugraha et al., 2024). Accordingly, differentiated instruction within Tahfidz education should not be viewed merely as a teaching technique but rather as a holistic pedagogical philosophy integrating cognitive, affective, social, and spiritual dimensions of learning.

Despite the growing recognition of differentiated instruction, empirical evidence demonstrating how differentiation is operationalized within Qur'an memorization programs at the secondary education level remains scarce. Existing studies rarely explain how adaptive instructional decisions are translated into concrete classroom practices, how teachers balance individualized learning with institutional curriculum demands, or how students experience differentiated memorization processes. Moreover, previous research has seldom examined differentiation as an integrated pedagogical system involving adaptive memorization targets, differentiated *muraja'ah* strategies, tiered *halaqah* organization, flexible assessment, and collaborative support among teachers, students, and parents. Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of differentiated instruction within Tahfidz education has yet to be established.

Responding to these theoretical and empirical gaps, this study investigates the implementation of differentiated instruction in the Tahfidz Qur'an program at Al-Qalam Junior High School, Jakarta. Specifically, the study addresses three research questions: (1) How do teachers implement differentiated instruction throughout memorization and *muraja'ah* activities? (2) What institutional and instructional factors facilitate or constrain the implementation of differentiated learning? (3) How do students experience differentiated Tahfidz learning within their daily educational practices? By examining these issues through a qualitative approach, this study contributes to the growing literature on differentiated instruction by extending its application to memorization-based Islamic education. Unlike previous studies that primarily discuss differentiation in general classroom settings, this research demonstrates how adaptive grouping, flexible memorization targets, differentiated *muraja'ah*, and responsive instructional support collectively form an integrated pedagogical model that promotes more inclusive, equitable, and student-centered Qur'an memorization. Accordingly, the findings are expected to enrich both differentiated instruction theory and Islamic educational practice while providing practical guidance for educational institutions seeking to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of Tahfidz programs.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore the implementation of differentiated instruction in the Tahfidz Qur'an program at Al-Qalam Junior High School, Jakarta. A

qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' experiences, instructional practices, and contextual meanings underlying differentiated learning within a natural educational setting. Rather than measuring predetermined variables, the research aimed to generate an in-depth understanding of how differentiated instruction was implemented, how it was perceived by different stakeholders, and what factors influenced its effectiveness (Sitorus, 2025).

The study was conducted over a three-month period from September to November. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring that individuals had direct experience with the implementation of the Tahfidz program and could provide rich information relevant to the research objectives. A total of 25 participants were involved, consisting of the school principal, Tahfidz teachers, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, and students participating in the Qur'an memorization program. This combination of participants enabled the researcher to capture multiple perspectives regarding instructional planning, classroom implementation, institutional support, and student learning experiences.

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations focused on instructional activities, teacher–student interactions, *halaqah* organization, *muraja'ah* practices, and assessment procedures. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with participants using flexible interview protocols that explored instructional planning, differentiated teaching strategies, challenges encountered during implementation, supporting factors, and participants' perceptions of learning experiences. To strengthen contextual understanding, institutional documents—including Tahfidz program guidelines, memorization schedules, student progress records, and school policy documents—were also examined. Combining multiple sources of evidence allowed for a richer and more comprehensive understanding of differentiated instruction within the research setting (Isnawati & Hudha, 2024; Wajdi et al., 2020).

The researcher served as the primary research instrument throughout the investigation. During data collection, reflexive field notes were maintained to record classroom situations, participant interactions, emerging interpretations, and methodological reflections. Maintaining reflexivity enabled the researcher to recognize potential biases and enhance the credibility of data interpretation throughout the research process.

Data analysis followed an inductive thematic analysis approach. After all interviews had been transcribed verbatim and observation notes had been compiled, the researcher repeatedly read the data to achieve familiarization with participants' experiences. Initial open coding was then conducted to identify meaningful units related to differentiate instructional practices, student learning experiences, supporting factors, and implementation challenges. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories through axial coding before being synthesized into overarching themes that represented the central patterns emerging across the dataset. These themes were continuously refined by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents until conceptual consistency was achieved. Finally, the themes were interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework of differentiated instruction and previous studies on Islamic education to develop meaningful explanations of the implementation process.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed following established qualitative research criteria. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement in the research field, source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking, allowing participants to verify the accuracy of interview interpretations. Dependability was supported through systematic documentation of research procedures and the maintenance of an audit trail throughout data collection and analysis. Confirmability was strengthened by maintaining reflexive notes and preserving original interview transcripts to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in participants' perspectives. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, instructional setting, and implementation process, enabling readers to evaluate the applicability of the findings to similar educational contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants and, where appropriate, from parents or guardians of student participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by replacing participants' identities with pseudonyms and securely storing all research data. The study adhered to the ethical principles of respect for persons, confidentiality, and responsible reporting to ensure the integrity of the research process.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

The Tahfidz Qur'an program at Al-Qalam Junior High School, Jakarta, is designed as a structured yet adaptive learning system to accommodate differences in students' memorization abilities. Variations in readiness, learning pace, and memorization quality require flexible learning management, which is implemented through daily memorization targets, continuous *muraja'ah*, and *halaqah* grouping based on achievement levels. (Setiadi & Fatkhullah, 2025)

Rather than functioning as routine activities, these elements form an adaptive learning structure that allows students to progress according to their individual capacity while maintaining minimum achievement standards. This reflects the principle of differentiated learning, where instruction is adjusted based on students' readiness, interests, and abilities to support optimal development. (EtHeridge, 2014).

In this context, *muraja'ah* serves not only as reinforcement but as a quality control mechanism to ensure memorization retention and consistency. (Alwi et al., 2023). Meanwhile, *halaqah* grouping operates as a form of readiness-based differentiation, enabling more targeted guidance and reducing learning gaps among students. Overall, these findings indicate that tahfidz learning at Al-Qalam is characterized by three key aspects: adaptive structure, emphasis on memorization quality, and alignment with individual student capacity. This suggests that the program moves beyond uniform instruction toward a more responsive and student-centered learning model.

Table 1. Principal Interview Resume

No.	Aspect	Key Findings
1	Learning implementation	Structured daily memorization (≥ 1 page) with flexible targets based on student progress
2	Role of <i>muraja'ah</i>	Intensive <i>muraja'ah</i> (5 cycles/day) to ensure retention, consistency, and long-term memorization quality
3	<i>Halaqah</i> grouping	Tiered grouping (<i>ula</i> , <i>wustha</i> , <i>ulya</i>) based on memorization achievement and retention ability.

The findings indicate that the integration of memorization targets, *muraja'ah* routines, and *halaqah* grouping functions as an adaptive learning system rather than merely a structured routine. This system reflects the principle of differentiation, where instruction is aligned with students' readiness and learning progression, enabling more effective and targeted guidance. (Sukardi & Inayati, 2024). From an implementation perspective, flexible memorization targets support individual pacing, allowing students with different capacities to progress without being constrained by uniform standards. At the same time, intensive *muraja'ah* serves as a reinforcement mechanism that ensures retention and consistency, confirming its role as a critical factor in maintaining memorization quality. (Haryono & Rajagede, 2022). This balance between acquisition and retention suggests that effective tahfidz learning requires a dual focus on quantity and quality.

The *halaqah* grouping system further operationalizes differentiation by organizing students based on their level of achievement, which increases instructional efficiency and reduces learning disparities. This supports previous findings on the importance of measurable targets in strengthening discipline. (Abdullah et al., 2024), while also demonstrating how differentiation can be embedded structurally

within the program. However, these findings also highlight a critical challenge. While the system is conceptually aligned with differentiation, its effectiveness depends on teacher readiness, monitoring, and time management. (Erdiana, n.d.). Without these supports, there is a risk that structured practices may shift toward rigid standardization rather than maintaining adaptive learning. Overall, the implementation of this model suggests that successful tahfidz learning requires not only a structured design but also continuous pedagogical adjustment. This indicates that differentiation in this context is not a static method, but a dynamic process that must be supported by teacher capacity and institutional readiness.

Table 2. Tahfidz Teacher Interview Resume

No.	Aspect	Key Findings
1	Internal inhibiting factors	Variations in ability, emotional instability, homesickness, and boredom reduce concentration and memorization quality
2	External inhibiting factors	Limited facilities, restricted environment, and monotonous routines decrease motivation and readiness.
3	Supporting factors	Discipline, intensive teacher guidance, peer support, religious motivation, rewards, and parental involvement enhance memorization performance.

In Table 2, the findings indicate that students' memorization performance is shaped by the interaction of psychological readiness, learning environment, and instructional support. Emotional stability and internal motivation function as key determinants of learning consistency, as students with stable psychological conditions tend to achieve better memorization outcomes and maintain regular *muraja'ah* practices. At the same time, the presence of clear targets, structured guidance, and habituated *muraja'ah* reflects a supportive learning system that strengthens discipline and retention. This is consistent with research showing that emotional intelligence significantly influences memorization ability. (Arqam et al., 2026), while teacher support, a conducive religious environment, and consistent coaching contribute to learning success (Sabrina et al., 2022).

Table 3. PAI Teacher Interview Resume

No.	Aspect	Key Findings
1	Instructional strategy	A combination of motivational and regulatory (disciplinary) approaches to address memorization difficulties
2	Motivational approach	Personalized guidance through dialogue, emotional support, and tailored encouragement to strengthen confidence and intrinsic motivation
3	Regulatory approach	Educational discipline (e.g., task assignment, limited privileges) to reinforce responsibility and consistency in memorization

In Table 3, the findings indicate that the integration of motivational and regulatory strategies functions as a complementary instructional approach in supporting students' memorization. The motivational dimension strengthens emotional readiness and intrinsic engagement, while the regulatory dimension ensures discipline and consistency in learning practices. This combination reflects a balanced approach between support and structure in tahfidz learning. These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that emotional stability, teacher-student interaction, and structured discipline are key factors in memorization success. Psychological aspects such as intrinsic motivation and emotional support significantly influence learning consistency. (Arqam et al., 2026) while structured guidance, clear targets, and consistent rules contribute to strengthening retention and student responsibility. However, rather than viewing these elements separately, the findings highlight that their effectiveness lies in their integration. The reinforcement of *muraja'ah* routines combined with personalized motivation and disciplined guidance forms a comprehensive learning system that supports both retention and engagement. This suggests that effective tahfidz learning is

not solely dependent on discipline or motivation alone, but on how both are strategically combined to create a sustainable and responsive learning process.

Table 4. Resume of Student Representative Interview

No.	Aspect	Key Findings
1	Learning experience	Structured routines foster discipline, consistency, and gradual adaptation to memorization practices.
2	<i>Halaqah</i> and teacher support	Ability-based grouping and responsive <i>musyrif</i> guidance create a supportive and non-pressuring learning environment.
3	Challenges and coping	Boredom and focus issues are mitigated through peer support, collective <i>muraja'ah</i> , and motivational reinforcement.

The findings show that the implementation of differentiated learning at Al-Qalam Junior High School Jakarta begins with systematic identification of student characteristics, including readiness, learning styles, and level of memorization mastery. This initial mapping functions as the foundation for instructional decisions, reflecting the core principle of differentiation that learning must be adjusted based on students' starting points (Tom- et al., 2017). In practice, differentiation is operationalized through adjustments in content, process, and learning outcomes. Teachers modify memorization materials according to students' progress, while also varying learning strategies—such as repetitive *muraja'ah* for struggling students and enrichment activities for advanced learners. This indicates that differentiation is implemented as an adaptive instructional process, not merely as a conceptual framework. (Hastuti & Sahnan, 2025) (Rahman & Sarnoto, 2024).

Beyond classroom practice, the findings highlight the role of collaborative support systems, particularly the involvement of parents in monitoring and reinforcing students' memorization at home. This suggests that differentiation extends beyond instructional design into a broader ecosystem of learning support. Consistent communication between teachers and parents strengthens alignment in learning strategies and reflects the principle of responsiveness in differentiation, where adaptation continues across contexts. (Sukmawati, 2022). However, while previous studies largely emphasize the effectiveness of differentiation in improving learning outcomes, these findings suggest that its success is highly dependent on continuous coordination and contextual adaptation. Without sustained collaboration and responsiveness, differentiation risks being reduced to procedural adjustments rather than a holistic learning approach.

Table 5. Findings and Conceptual Synthesis of Implementation

No.	Key Thematic Aspects	Program Manager Perspective	Teacher Perspective	Student Perspective
1	Adaptive learning structure	Flexible targets and structured <i>muraja'ah</i> ensure program consistency	<i>Halaqah</i> grouping enables level-based instructional adjustment	Clear targets increase comfort and learning engagement
2	Multidimensional learning factors	Student diversity and facility limitations shape program challenges	Emotional fluctuation and motivation influence memorization performance	Personal and contextual factors (e.g., homesickness, routines) affect concentration
3	Integrated support strategy	Humanistic and structured coaching is institutionally supported	A combination of motivational and regulatory strategies strengthens discipline	Guidance and support enhance confidence and persistence

In the midst of the implementation of the differentiated learning model, Tahfidz teachers at Al-Qalam Junior High School faced challenges in compiling materials that were in accordance with the

diverse progress among students. Interview data showed that some teachers had difficulty balancing the individualized approach and the demands of a uniform *tahfidz* curriculum. This is similar to the findings in the implementation at Muhammadiyah Lasem Junior High School, where teachers' limited understanding of differentiation causes learning orientation to sometimes focus more on methods and media than on meeting individual needs (Sukardi & Inayati, 2024). Within the framework of critical education theory, this kind of obstacle suggests that the implementation of differentiation should not simply be a symbol of methodological novelty (*Pseudo-innovation*) but must substantively transform pedagogical practices with the support of professional training for teachers and a consistent formative assessment system (Sandy et al., 2024)

3.2 Discussion

The findings demonstrate that differentiated instruction in the Tahfidz Qur'an program extends beyond instructional adaptation and functions as a comprehensive pedagogical system that accommodates students' cognitive, emotional, and motivational diversity. Rather than merely adjusting memorization targets, the program integrates flexible *halaqah* grouping, differentiated *muraja'ah* practices, individualized teacher guidance, and continuous formative monitoring into a coherent learning framework. This suggests that differentiation in Qur'an memorization should not be understood as isolated classroom modifications but as a dynamic process of aligning instructional decisions with students' readiness and learning progression. Such findings reinforce Tomlinson's (2021) proposition that effective differentiated instruction requires continuous adjustment of content, process, product, and learning environment according to learner characteristics, while extending this framework into the distinctive context of memorization-based Islamic education.

An important finding concerns the implementation of tiered *halaqah* grouping according to students' memorization achievement. Unlike conventional grouping practices that primarily serve administrative purposes, the grouping system observed in this study functioned as an instructional strategy that enabled teachers to provide learning experiences appropriate to students' current capabilities. Students with stronger memorization abilities received enrichment through higher memorization targets, whereas those experiencing difficulties received additional *muraja'ah* sessions and closer instructional guidance. This adaptive arrangement reflects the principle that effective learning occurs when instructional demands remain within learners' zone of achievable development rather than imposing identical expectations on all students. Consequently, differentiation reduced instructional disparities without lowering academic standards, creating a more equitable learning environment where every student was encouraged to progress according to individual capacity.

The effectiveness of differentiated memorization targets also reflects broader principles of self-regulated learning. Flexible targets appeared to strengthen students' sense of competence because learning expectations became realistic and attainable rather than uniformly prescribed. Previous educational research has consistently shown that students demonstrate higher engagement and persistence when instructional goals match their readiness levels (Eikeland & Ohna, 2022; Ramdhani et al., 2024). The present findings indicate that this principle also applies within Qur'an memorization, where gradual progress fosters sustained motivation and minimizes frustration among learners with varying memorization abilities. Therefore, differentiated targets function not only as instructional accommodations but also as motivational mechanisms that promote long-term persistence in memorization.

Muraja'ah emerged as another critical component supporting differentiated instruction. Rather than serving merely as repetitive review, intensive *muraja'ah* functioned as an adaptive reinforcement strategy that strengthened retention and stabilized memorization quality. This finding may be interpreted through contemporary learning theory, particularly retrieval practice and distributed learning, which emphasize that repeated recall over time substantially improves long-term memory retention. Within the context of Tahfidz education, *muraja'ah* therefore represents more than a religious learning routine; it constitutes an evidence-based cognitive strategy that facilitates durable

memorization while allowing teachers to identify individual learning difficulties continuously. Such integration of religious pedagogical tradition with contemporary learning principles illustrates how differentiated instruction can be contextualized within Islamic education without compromising its religious authenticity.

Another significant contribution of this study lies in identifying the interaction between psychological readiness and differentiated instructional support. Students' emotional stability, confidence, homesickness, boredom, and learning motivation substantially influenced memorization consistency, indicating that successful *Tahfidz* education depends not solely on cognitive ability but equally on affective conditions. Personalized encouragement, responsive teacher guidance, peer support, and parental involvement collectively created a learning ecology that sustained students' persistence throughout the memorization process. These findings support previous studies emphasizing the importance of emotional support in Qur'an memorization (Arqam et al., 2026; Sabrina et al., 2022), while extending existing knowledge by demonstrating that differentiated instruction should encompass emotional and social responsiveness in addition to academic adaptation. Thus, differentiation in Islamic education appears to function as a holistic pedagogical philosophy rather than merely a classroom management strategy.

Despite these positive outcomes, the findings also reveal important challenges that influence implementation quality. Teachers experienced difficulties balancing individualized instruction with standardized curriculum expectations, particularly when preparing differentiated learning materials for students exhibiting highly diverse learning progress. This challenge confirms earlier studies indicating that differentiated instruction requires considerable pedagogical competence, planning time, and institutional support (Sukardi & Inayati, 2024). Without sufficient professional development, differentiation risks becoming procedural rather than transformative, where teachers modify classroom activities superficially without fundamentally responding to individual learning needs (Sandy et al., 2024). Consequently, successful implementation depends not only on teachers' instructional creativity but also on systematic institutional investment in professional training, collaborative planning, and formative assessment practices.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of differentiated instruction by demonstrating that memorization-based Islamic education requires multidimensional differentiation encompassing learning targets, instructional processes, emotional support, and continuous reinforcement simultaneously. Existing differentiated instruction literature predominantly emphasizes adaptation of curriculum content and classroom activities (Tomlinson, 2021), whereas the present findings indicate that memorization-centered learning introduces additional dimensions, including adaptive *muraja'ah*, tiered *halaqah* organization, and sustained motivational mentoring. This expands the applicability of differentiated instruction theory into religious education contexts characterized by cumulative memorization, spiritual development, and individualized learning trajectories.

Overall, the findings suggest that differentiated instruction in *Tahfidz* education should be conceptualized as an integrated pedagogical ecosystem rather than a collection of isolated teaching techniques. Adaptive grouping, flexible memorization targets, individualized reinforcement, emotional guidance, and institutional support collectively create learning conditions that promote equitable participation while maintaining rigorous memorization standards. Accordingly, effective *Tahfidz* instruction requires continuous pedagogical responsiveness that recognizes student diversity as an educational resource rather than an instructional obstacle. This perspective provides a stronger theoretical foundation for designing inclusive Qur'an memorization programs and offers practical guidance for Islamic educational institutions seeking to implement more responsive, sustainable, and student-centered learning environments.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that differentiated instruction in the *Tahfidz* Qur'an program at Al-Qalam Junior High School, Jakarta, functions as an integrated pedagogical approach that effectively

accommodates students' diverse memorization abilities, learning pace, emotional readiness, and motivational needs. The findings demonstrate that the implementation of tiered *halaqah* grouping, flexible memorization targets, differentiated *muraja'ah* practices, personalized teacher guidance, and collaborative support from parents collectively creates a more adaptive, equitable, and student-centered learning environment while maintaining the quality and consistency of Qur'an memorization. Beyond extending the application of differentiated instruction theory to memorization-based Islamic education, this study highlights that effective differentiation involves not only instructional adaptation but also the integration of cognitive, affective, and contextual dimensions of learning. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its focus on a single Islamic junior high school and its reliance on a qualitative design, which restricts the generalizability of the findings and does not permit measurement of long-term effects on memorization achievement or retention. Future research is therefore recommended to involve multiple educational institutions with diverse characteristics, employ mixed-methods or longitudinal research designs, and investigate the long-term impact of differentiated instruction on Qur'an memorization quality, retention, student motivation, and teacher professional competence. Further studies should also develop and validate conceptual models of differentiated Tahfidz instruction to strengthen both theoretical understanding and practical implementation in Islamic education.

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