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Constructing the mujahid character: a resilience-enhancing strategy for university students in tahfidz Al-Quran programs

Hadil Ismail Hasan^{1*)}, Abas Mansur Tamam², Akhmad Alim³

¹Institut Muslim Cendekia, Sukabumi, Indonesia

^{2,3}Universitas Ibn Khaldun, Bogor, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Tahfidz students are vulnerable to academic burnout due to the dual This study aims to explore the construction of the Mujahid Character consisting of Tsabat, Indhibath, Syaja'ah, and Shabr as a framework for strengthening academic resilience and religious coping among university Tahfidz students. This qualitative case study involved 100 Tahfidz students at Arraayah University. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and focus group discussions, then analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that students experience challenges related to self-regulation, memorization fatigue, performance anxiety, and emotional control. The four dimensions of Mujahid Character function as psychological resources supporting perseverance, discipline, courage, and adaptive emotional regulation. The Mujahid Character represents a psycho-pedagogical framework that supports academic resilience; however, its implementation requires structured institutional mentoring and psychological support within Tahfidz programs.



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Corresponding Author:

Hadil Ismail Hasan,
Institut Muslim Cendekia
Email: hadilismail@arraayah.ac.id

Introduction

University students involved in Quranic memorization (Tahfidz Al-Qur'an) programs face a complex academic and psychological challenge because they are required to simultaneously fulfill higher education demands and maintain intensive memorization commitments. The increasing academic pressure in the context of globalization and technological development requires students to develop adaptive psychological capacities while maintaining their religious identity (Murdianto, 2024). Although Tahfidz programs provide significant spiritual benefits, several studies indicate that learning processes in some institutions still emphasize memorization achievement as the primary indicator of success, while psychological preparation and emotional support receive comparatively less attention (Mundhofir & Sugiyono, 2024; Raihani, 2011). This condition may contribute to academic fatigue, ineffective time management, and difficulties in maintaining motivation among students who must manage multiple academic and religious responsibilities (Rezeki et al., 2025; Freire et al., 2020).

The psychological challenges experienced by Tahfidz students cannot be understood merely as problems of memorization ability but as issues related to academic resilience, self-regulation, and coping mechanisms. Previous research demonstrates that excessive academic demands without adequate coping strategies may increase the risk of burnout and reduce students' academic functioning (Thomas, 2020). Furthermore,

educational environments that emphasize cognitive achievement without sufficient emotional support may weaken students' self-efficacy and increase vulnerability to academic difficulties (Marôco et al., 2020). In the context of Quranic memorization, students require a balanced educational approach that integrates cognitive achievement, spiritual development, and psychological strengthening. Therefore, the development of character-based frameworks that support students' internal regulation and resilience becomes an important area of investigation (Halstead, 2004; Hernada et al., 2025).

Within Islamic educational perspectives, the concept of Mujahid can be understood not only as a religious identity but also as a framework describing individuals who continuously strive to overcome internal challenges (jihad al-nafs) through perseverance, self-control, and moral commitment. This conceptualization is relevant to students' psychological development because academic resilience requires the ability to persist during difficulties, regulate behavior, manage emotional responses, and adapt to challenging situations. In this study, the Mujahid Character is conceptualized through four interconnected dimensions: Tsabat (perseverance), Indhibath (discipline), Syaja'ah (courage), and Shabr (patience). These dimensions represent psychological resources that may support students in managing academic pressure, maintaining memorization consistency, overcoming performance anxiety, and regulating emotional responses. The relationship between religious commitment and psychological adaptation is also consistent with the concept of positive religious coping proposed by Pargament et al. (2000).

Despite growing attention to academic burnout, self-regulation, and religious coping among students, an important research gap remains regarding how Islamic character values can be operationalized into a psychological framework within higher education Tahfidz programs. Previous studies have largely examined Quranic memorization from curriculum management, institutional practice, or character education perspectives, but limited research has explored the psychological mechanisms through which specific Islamic character dimensions contribute to students' resilience development (Hidayah, 2016; Rohmah & Swandari, 2021). Although Hasan and Tamam (2026) developed an educational model based on asy-Syakhshiyyah al-Mujāhidah for Tahfidz students, further investigation is still required to understand how these character dimensions function in students' real experiences when facing academic pressure, memorization difficulties, and emotional challenges.

Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyze the construction of the Mujahid Character as a psycho-pedagogical framework for strengthening academic resilience and religious coping among university Tahfidz students. This research contributes to the development of Islamic educational psychology by examining how perseverance, discipline, courage, and patience operate as adaptive resources within students' academic and spiritual experiences. The findings are expected to provide a more balanced perspective on Tahfidz education by emphasizing not only memorization achievement but also students' psychological well-being and sustainable personal development.

Method

Research Approach and Design

To achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher adopted a qualitative approach utilizing a case study design. This specific design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of complex psychological phenomena within their natural context. Specifically, it facilitates the exploration of how students interact with academic pressures and how they utilize the dimensions of the Mujahid character as a strategy for psychological resilience within a higher education environment.

Research Setting and Participants

Data for this research were extracted from the preliminary field diagnostic phase conducted at Arraayah University in Sukabumi. The researcher employed a purposive sampling technique to select the participants. The data sources included initial diagnostic questionnaires distributed to 100 Quranic memorization students across four academic levels. This step aimed to clearly identify the psychological challenges and academic pressures they face on a daily basis. To deepen this understanding, a focus group of students and supervisors was selected for in-depth qualitative interviews that reflect their actual struggles and coping strategies.

Data Collection and Triangulation

The study relied on data triangulation to ensure research reliability, utilizing three primary instruments. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted to uncover underlying psychological obstacles, such as academic fatigue and poor self-regulation, as well as how students attempt to overcome them. Second, participant observation was used to closely monitor the students' emotional responses during public recitation sessions and when receiving direct corrections. Third, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were organized to facilitate an

exchange of perspectives between students and supervisors regarding the Mujahid character concept and its practical applications in navigating academic challenges.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed thematically using an iterative analytical process informed by the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis began with the verbatim transcription of interview and focus group data, followed by repeated reading to develop an understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives. The researcher then conducted initial coding to identify concepts related to academic pressures, psychological challenges, coping responses, and the four dimensions of the Mujahid character. Relevant data were subsequently condensed by selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing information according to the research objectives (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The coded data were then displayed and grouped into emerging categories and themes. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified by comparing findings across interviews, observations, questionnaires, and FGDs. The resulting themes were organized around the four dimensions of the Mujahid character Tsabat (perseverance), Indhibath (discipline), Syaja'ah (courage), and Shabr (patience) and interpreted in relation to their roles in supporting students' psychological resilience.

Research Ethics

This study adhered to established ethical principles for qualitative research involving human participants. Before data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the data collection procedures, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the questionnaires, interviews, observations, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted. Participants were also informed that the information they provided would be used solely for research purposes. To protect confidentiality, participants' identities were anonymized in the research records and reporting, and the collected data were handled securely. Particular attention was given to protecting participants when discussing academic pressure, psychological challenges, and personal coping experiences. The Researcher maintained respect for participants' autonomy, privacy, and dignity throughout the research process.

Results and Discussions

Research Results

This section presents the empirical field results collected to diagnose the current state of Quranic memorization programs and the underlying psychological needs of students at Institut Muslim Cendekia. The data collection relied on questionnaires distributed to a purposive sample of 100 students across four academic levels, specifically the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth semesters. Additionally, qualitative interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with both students and supervisors. The findings are divided into quantitative and qualitative tracks.

Quantitative Results: Diagnosing the Dimensions of the Mujahid Character

Field needs were measured based on the four dimensions of the Mujahid character acting as mechanisms for psychological resilience. The data were statistically processed to extract arithmetic means on a graduated scale of 1 to 3. A higher mean indicates a greater need for a systematic pedagogical intervention. Table 1 summarizes the processed questionnaire results.

The quantitative diagnostic data presented in Table 1 reveal different levels of need across the four dimensions of the Mujahid character. Among the four dimensions, Syaja'ah (Courage) recorded the highest arithmetic mean ($M = 2.63$) and was categorized as a high level of need. The finding indicates that students require substantial support in developing confidence during public recitation and managing performance anxiety. Field observations further indicated that psychological apprehension often interfered with students' ability to perform confidently in front of their study groups. This dimension therefore emerged as the most prominent psychological need identified in the diagnostic phase.

Indhibath (Discipline) also showed a high level of need, with an arithmetic mean of 2.41. The diagnostic findings indicate that students require a structured framework to strengthen time management and self-regulation, particularly in situations where external supervision is limited. The data suggest that students' current discipline is still strongly dependent on administrative monitoring, indicating a need to strengthen internal regulation and personal responsibility for managing academic and memorization demands.

In contrast, Tsabat (Perseverance) obtained a mean score of 1.66 and was categorized as a moderate level of need. The diagnostic results indicate that some students tend to experience fatigue or give up when confronted

with difficulties in Qur'anic recitation alongside demanding university coursework. This finding points to challenges in maintaining continuity when students encounter repeated academic or memorization difficulties. Similarly, Shabr (Patience) recorded a mean of 1.67 and was also classified as a moderate level of need. Students demonstrated challenges in sustaining emotional endurance when receiving repeated corrections and dealing with the prolonged process of achieving memorization mastery. The findings further indicate that patience has not yet been systematically integrated into standardized training procedures within the program.

Table 1. Diagnostic of Students' Psychological and Educational Needs Based on Character Dimensions.

Character Dimension (Resilience Mechanism)	Field-Measured Indicator	Arithmetic Mean	Need Level	Diagnostic Result
1. Courage (Syaja'ah)	The need to train boldness for public recitation and overcome performance anxiety.	2.63	High	This is the most prominent need. Students experience psychological dread that prevents confident performance in front of the study circle.
2. Discipline (Indhibath)	The need for a guiding framework for time management and self-regulation without external monitoring.	2.41	High	There is a lack of self-regulation. Current discipline relies heavily on administrative monitoring rather than internal awareness.
3. Perseverance (Tsabat)	The tendency to surrender or experience fatigue when facing recitation difficulties and heavy university course loads.	1.66	Moderate	There is fragility in continuity. Students lack resilience strategies to cope when academic failures accumulate.
4. Patience (Shabr)	The ability to absorb repeated corrections and mentally train oneself for the long path toward memorization mastery.	1.67	Moderate	Students exhibit weak emotional endurance. The cultivation of patience has not been integrated into standardized training steps within the program.

Overall, the diagnostic data indicate that the four dimensions do not contribute equally to students' resilience needs. Syaja'ah and Indhibath represent the most pronounced areas requiring support, whereas Tsabat and Shabr show moderate levels of need. The data also reveal that progression across academic semesters, from the second to the eighth semester, does not correspond to a clear increase in the indicators of courage and discipline. Rather than showing consistent developmental growth, these dimensions appear relatively stable across academic levels. This pattern suggests that prolonged participation in the existing academic and memorization system does not automatically strengthen psychological resilience. The findings therefore indicate the need for a more intentional and developmental approach to cultivating the Mujahid character as part of students' academic and religious coping processes.

Qualitative Results: Voices of Students and Supervisors

To deepen the understanding of the quantitative figures, the thematic analysis of the open interviews and focus group discussions yielded three main themes that represent the actual struggles of the students.

Theme One: The Crisis of Time Management and Self-Regulation

Time management emerged as one of the most prominent challenges identified through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Interviews indicated that students experienced difficulties in balancing university coursework with the daily demands of Qur'anic memorization. A sixth-semester student explained that managing heavy academic assignments alongside the requirement to memorize approximately one and a half pages per day was extremely challenging and sometimes left him uncertain about where to begin. Participant observations during academic and memorization activities also indicated difficulties in maintaining consistent attention and managing competing demands. During the FGD, students and supervisors discussed the importance of self-regulation and effective time management in maintaining students' academic and memorization routines. These findings are consistent with the quantitative result showing that *Indhibath* (Discipline) represented a high level of need ($M = 2.41$). The qualitative evidence

indicates that students require structured support to strengthen self-regulation and manage academic and memorization demands more effectively.

Theme Two: Fatigue and Difficulty in Sustaining Memorization

The second theme concerns psychological fatigue and difficulties in maintaining persistence during the memorization process. Semi-structured interviews revealed that repeated recitation errors could reduce students' enthusiasm and motivation. One student reported that when errors accumulated over several days, he sometimes lost the motivation to continue and considered giving up. Participant observations during recitation sessions provided additional contextual evidence, particularly through students' emotional responses when receiving direct corrections. Some students appeared to experience frustration or reduced confidence following repeated corrections. These experiences were also discussed during the FGD, in which students and supervisors reflected on the difficulties of maintaining consistency when students faced repeated memorization problems. The findings correspond with the moderate level of need identified for *Tsabat* (Perseverance), which recorded a mean of 1.66, indicating the importance of supporting students' ability to maintain continuity and recover from repeated setbacks.

Theme Three: Performance Anxiety and the Need for Supportive Supervision

The third theme emerged from the combination of interviews, participant observations, and FGD discussions concerning students' responses to public recitation and direct correction. Interviews indicated that some students experienced anxiety when required to demonstrate their memorization in front of others. Participant observations during public recitation sessions showed that emotional responses could become visible when students faced difficulties in recalling verses or received direct corrections. These observations provide contextual support for the quantitative finding that *Syaja'ah* (Courage) had the highest level of need ($M = 2.63$). During the FGD, students and supervisors discussed the importance of courage, patience, and constructive responses to correction as part of the memorization process. Students expressed the need for supervision that not only addresses recitation accuracy but also helps them manage anxiety and frustration. The findings indicate that supportive supervision may be important in translating the values of *Syaja'ah* and *Shabr* into practical responses to academic and memorization challenges.

Integration of the Qualitative Findings

The findings from semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and FGDs provide complementary perspectives on the psychological and educational challenges experienced by Tahfidz students. Interviews provided insight into students' personal experiences of academic pressure, fatigue, anxiety, and self-regulation difficulties. Participant observations provided contextual evidence of students' emotional responses during public recitation and direct correction. Meanwhile, the FGDs enabled the perspectives of students and supervisors to be examined together, particularly regarding the meaning and practical application of the Mujahid character in responding to academic challenges.

Taken together, the qualitative findings indicate that the four dimensions of the Mujahid character are relevant to different aspects of students' experiences. *Indhibath* is associated with self-regulation and time management, *Tsabat* with persistence in facing repeated difficulties, *Syaja'ah* with confidence during public recitation, and *Shabr* with emotional regulation when receiving correction. The triangulation of interviews, observations, and FGDs suggests that these character dimensions are relevant to students' academic and psychological challenges, while their practical application requires more structured support within the Tahfidz program.

The findings of this study indicate that the challenges experienced by university Tahfidz students are not solely related to memorization ability, but also involve psychological adaptation, self-regulation capacity, and the management of continuous academic and religious demands. The four dimensions of the Mujahid Character, namely *Tsabat* (perseverance), *Indhibath* (discipline), *Syaja'ah* (courage), and *Shabr* (patience), can be understood as religiously grounded psychological resources that shape students' coping processes when facing academic pressures. Rather than positioning these dimensions as direct predictors of academic resilience, the findings suggest that they function as internal character mechanisms that support students in interpreting difficulties, maintaining motivation, and developing adaptive responses within the Tahfidz learning environment.

The dimension of *Tsabat* provides an important perspective in understanding students' ability to maintain commitment when encountering memorization difficulties, repeated errors, and academic fatigue. In Islamic scholarship, *Tsabat* refers to steadfastness, stability, and firmness in maintaining commitment despite challenges (Al-Asfahani, 1995; Ayat al-Tsabat, n.d.). The present findings indicate that students often experience frustration and reduced motivation when memorization challenges accumulate alongside university responsibilities. This condition reflects characteristics of academic burnout, where prolonged cognitive and emotional demands may

reduce students' psychological resources (Thomas, 2020). In this context, Tsabat can be interpreted as a character-based resilience resource that encourages students to perceive failure as part of the learning process rather than as a threat to personal competence. This interpretation is consistent with research demonstrating that spirituality contributes to resilience development by providing meaning and psychological support during stressful experiences (Reyes-Perez, 2025).

The findings further reveal that Indhibath represents a crucial dimension associated with students' self-regulation and learning management. Conceptually, Indhibath emphasizes consistency, order, and commitment in carrying out responsibilities (Manzhur, 2004). The empirical findings show that many students still depend on external supervision to maintain memorization routines and academic discipline, indicating challenges in developing autonomous regulation. This condition corresponds with previous research highlighting that weak self-regulated learning skills contribute to procrastination, distraction, and ineffective academic management (Brahma & Saikia, 2023). Although previous Tahfidz management studies have often emphasized institutional control mechanisms such as monitoring systems and attendance regulations (Rohmah & Swandari, 2021), this study highlights the importance of shifting discipline from external regulation toward internal awareness. Thus, Indhibath contributes to the integration between Islamic character education and contemporary self-regulated learning perspectives.

The role of Syaja'ah emerged as a significant finding because students demonstrated considerable challenges related to public recitation, fear of mistakes, and performance anxiety. In Islamic thought, Syaja'ah represents courage and inner strength in facing difficulties (Hamid, n.d.; Al-Aswad, 2007). From a psychological perspective, these challenges are closely related to fear of negative evaluation, in which individuals experience anxiety regarding judgment and criticism from others. Previous research confirms that excessive fear of negative evaluation may reduce students' confidence and assertive academic behavior (Azis, 2025). The present findings also emphasize that courage among Tahfidz students is not developed automatically through memorization activities but requires supportive educational interactions. This aligns with evidence showing that psychological safety enhances student participation and encourages learners to engage actively without excessive fear of failure (Ananta, 2026). Therefore, Syaja'ah should be understood as a socially developed character dimension supported by constructive supervision and emotionally supportive learning environments.

The dimension of Shabr provides an explanation of how students manage frustration, repeated correction, and emotional challenges during the memorization process. In Islamic perspectives, patience refers to self-restraint, emotional control, and the ability to maintain commitment during difficult situations (Al-Asfahani, 1995; Ayat al-Shabr, n.d.). The findings indicate that repeated correction from supervisors may generate emotional pressure when students interpret feedback as personal failure rather than developmental guidance. Contemporary psychological perspectives emphasize that adaptive emotional regulation, particularly cognitive reappraisal, is more effective in managing academic stress than emotional suppression (Tumole & Dewi, 2025). In this context, Shabr should not be understood as passive acceptance but as an active process of reconstructing meaning, enabling students to perceive challenges as opportunities for improvement. This interpretation is supported by research suggesting that patience is associated with psychological well-being, adaptive acceptance, and coping capacity in stressful situations (Rahma Suryani & Rajab, 2026).

Overall, the findings suggest that the Mujahid Character represents an integrated psycho-pedagogical framework that connects Islamic values with contemporary psychological processes. Tsabat supports persistence in facing difficulties, Indhibath strengthens self-regulation, Syaja'ah facilitates confidence in confronting performance challenges, and Shabr contributes to emotional regulation during academic pressures. However, these findings should be interpreted within the scope of a qualitative exploratory study, which provides an understanding of students' experiences rather than establishing causal effectiveness. Therefore, the contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing how Islamic character dimensions may function as meaningful psychological resources within university Tahfidz programs, while future research is needed to develop and empirically test structured interventions based on the Mujahid Character framework.

Conclusions

This study concludes that the construction of the Mujahid Character, consisting of Tsabat (perseverance), Indhibath (discipline), Syaja'ah (courage), and Shabr (patience), represents a meaningful psycho-pedagogical framework for understanding how university Tahfidz students respond to academic and psychological challenges. The findings indicate that these dimensions are experienced as internal character resources that support students in maintaining persistence, developing self-regulation, managing performance anxiety, and regulating emotional responses during the Quranic memorization process. Therefore, the development of Tahfidz programs needs to consider not only memorization achievement but also the cultivation of psychological

resilience and religious coping through structured character-based support. Further research is needed to empirically examine the implementation and effectiveness of the Mujahid Character framework in broader educational contexts.

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