

BEYOND MEMORIZATION: QURANIC ENGAGEMENT AND TADABBUR IN RELATION TO ACADEMIC, MORAL, AND MENTAL WELL-BEING OUTCOMES

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Abstract: *Quranic engagement encompasses not only recitation and memorisation but also tadabbur, or reflective engagement with the meanings and guidance of Quranic verses. This cross-sectional study examined the relationships between Quranic engagement and reflection and students' perceived academic outcomes, self-reported moral behaviour and mental well-being, and determined whether the combined outcomes differed across four memorisation levels after controlling for engagement and reflection. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 137 Degree in Muamalat and Plus Tahfiz students at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Kampus Machang. Pearson's correlations and multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) were performed. Quranic engagement and reflection were positively correlated with perceived academic outcomes ($r = 0.726$, $p < 0.001$), moral behaviour ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.001$) and mental well-being ($r = 0.580$, $p < 0.001$). After controlling for engagement and reflection, memorisation level did not have a statistically significant multivariate association with the combined outcomes ($F = 1.392$, $p = 0.191$), whereas engagement and reflection were significantly associated with the combined outcomes ($F = 22.782$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that, within this sample, reflective Quranic engagement was more consistently associated with the measured outcomes than the number of juz memorised.*

Keywords: *Quranic engagement, tadabbur, Quranic memorisation, perceived academic outcomes, moral behaviour, mental well-being, MANCOVA, university students.*

Introduction

Engagement and reflection on Quranic verses refers to the regular practice of reading, reciting, understanding which is *tadabbur* and applying the teachings of the Al-Quran in daily life. A study by Mohamed Najm and Bey Zekkoub (2025) defines that *tadabbur* or reflection on Al-Quran is a divine command that encourages Muslim to deeply understand and absorb the teachings of the al-Quran. Thus, it is a necessary practice for achieving full understanding of divine guidance. Arifin (2022) further explained that human interactions with the Al-Quran such as reading, memorizing, listening, meditating or considering the meaning of Al-Quran can influence the structure and function of the brain at the microscopically cellular.

The study aims the concept of *tadabbur* is fundamentally rooted in the Al-Quran itself. Allah says:

“This is a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded.”

(Surah Sad: verses 29)

This verse to explain what establishes that reflection upon the Al-Quran is one of the primary objectives of divine revelation, indicating that engagement with the Al-Quran extends beyond recitation and memorization toward deep understanding and practical application. Fikri et al. (2024) found that Islamic spiritual coping strategies such as *sabr* (patience), *tawakkal* (trust in God) and *salah* (prayer) are effective in managing academic and emotional stress among Malaysian university students. Similarly, Mazzuki et al. (2024) reported that positive spiritual coping is significantly associated with lower levels of depression, anxiety and stress, particularly among students in the medical and health sciences. Megat Laksana and Nor Hisham (2025) further emphasized that integrating Islamic-based mental health strategies into students' daily routines promotes resilience and holistic well-being.

In Surah al-Ra'd, verses 28: Allah said

“Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts find rest.”

This verse provides the Islamic theoretical foundation for explaining how engagement with the Qur'an contributes to psychological tranquillity and emotional resilience. These findings suggest opportunities for designing improved Quranic memorization strategies that benefit students cognitively. More recently, Hechehouche et al. (2020) confirmed that Quranic recitation, particularly when listened to, can reduce anxiety and improve mental clarity, further reinforcing the therapeutic potential of spiritual engagement. In addition, a systematic review by the Anli (2025) highlights how integrating Quranic values into positive psychology programs contributes to greater emotional stability and post-traumatic growth among young Muslims.

Existing studies generally indicate that Quranic recitation, memorisation and Islamic spiritual practices are positively associated with psychological well-being, moral development and academic-related outcomes. Quranic engagement has been linked to emotional tranquillity, religious coping, self-discipline, moral awareness and perceived improvements in learning and concentration. Collectively, this evidence suggests that interaction with the Quran may support the holistic development of Muslim university students.

Nevertheless, previous research has often examined Quranic memorisation, recitation, religiosity or spiritual coping as separate practices, with limited distinction between the quantity of Quran memorised and the quality of reflective engagement with its meanings. Memorisation primarily involves retaining and accurately recalling the Quranic text, whereas *tadabbur* involves contemplating its meanings, deriving guidance and relating Quranic principles to personal decisions and lived experiences. These practices are complementary rather than competing; however, a greater quantity of memorisation does not necessarily indicate a greater depth of reflection. It therefore remains unclear whether student outcomes are more consistently associated with memorisation level or reflective Quranic engagement.

Perceived academic functioning, moral behaviour and mental well-being were examined simultaneously because they represent interrelated dimensions of holistic student development. *Tadabbur* may be associated with cognitive processes through concentration and disciplined learning, moral processes through the internalisation of Quranic values, and emotional processes through tranquillity and regulation of negative emotions. Analysing these outcomes jointly through MANCOVA also accounts for their interrelationships and limits the inflation of Type I error that could arise from conducting multiple separate analyses.

Degree in Muamalat and Plus Tahfiz students provide a relevant context because they study in an academic environment where Quranic and Islamic knowledge is particularly salient while displaying substantial variation in memorisation experience. In the present sample, memorisation ranged from less than one juz to between 21 and 30 juz. Accordingly, this study examined the relationships between Quranic engagement and reflection and perceived academic, moral and mental well-being outcomes and determined whether the combined outcomes differed across memorisation levels after controlling for engagement and reflection.

This study focused on full-time Degree in Muamalat and Plus Tahfiz students from Semester 1 to Semester 7 at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Kampus Machang, Kelantan. Part-time students and students undergoing industrial training were excluded. The study examined perceived academic outcomes, self-reported moral behaviour and mental well-being; it did not assess objective academic records or clinical mental health diagnoses. Its single-campus, cross-sectional and self-reported design limits causal interpretation and generalisation beyond the study population.

Literature Review

The relationship between a Muslim with the holy Quran can be divided into four main categories. Ibrahim et al. (2022) has said in their journal that they are learning the Quran, memorizing the Quran, clearly understanding it and teaching the Quran to other people. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: *“Whoever recites a letter from Allah’s Book, then he receives the reward from it and the reward of ten the like of it. I do not say that “Alif Lam Mim” is a letter, but “Alif” is a letter, “Lam” is a letter and “Mim” is a letter.”* (Tirmidhi: No. 2910).

Surah Muhammad, verses: 24)

“Then do they not reflect upon the Quran, or are there locks upon their hearts?”

This verse demonstrates that failure to engage in *tadabbur* is associated with spiritual negligence, suggesting that reflection is essential for the transformation of the human heart.

Numerous studies have shown a positive link between al-Quran memorization and academic achievement. Gulamhusein et al. (2023) in their journal clearly shows that al-Quran memorization contributes positively to student's academic journey. 74.7% of students express a positive view of al-Quran memorization's effects on their academic performance and 31.8% of the students strongly agree that memorizing al-Quran can give a positive impact to their academic performance.

According to Nurkholifah (2024) in the journal "The Role Of Al-Quran Literacy in Deepening Understanding of Islamic Religious Education" has written the explanation from a teacher who has stated that "Students who are actively involved in Quranic literacy are better able to demonstrate a positive moral attitude which can be seen in their daily lives". The writer also reveals that Quranic Literacy is an essential in deepening the understanding of Islamic Religious Education materials and also developing students' character. Activities such as reading, learning and exploring the meaning of Al-Quran verses can give a significant impact on students' moral and ethical attitudes in Quranic literacy.

Nurkholifah (2024) also said that Al-Quran literacy activities also integrated with religious education in strengthening students' character by teaching them patience, honesty and responsibility. There is one student who has said that "After reading Al-Quran regularly, I feel more responsible and patient when dealing with various situations." The author also said that students who are actively involved in Al-Quran literacy always show improvements in their moral behaviour such as learning to face challenges more positively, practicing religious teachings in their social interactions and also acting with empathy towards other people. This also can improve their personal qualities and can affect their relationship with each other's, productive social relationships and also can strengthen harmonious relationships with people.

Other than that, previous study also highlights that religious teachings and spiritual practices have a strong foundation in moral behaviour. Moral behaviour such as compassion, patience, justice and honesty is described in the Al-Quran and serves as guidelines for social interactions and also personal behaviour (Sule & Mainiyo, 2024). Lastly, Ahmad Mansor and Md Zain (2025) also said that incorporating an Islamic psychospiritual approach in student ethics can enhance the moral awareness and ethical behaviour by fostering the inner balance and spiritual values.

Besides that, Rizvi and Pasha-Zaidi (2021) elaborate that spiritual health is one of the important key components of well-being especially for those who identify themselves as religious including Muslim. For example, performing prayers, zakat and self-control can make Muslims move from lower spirit which is a *nafs al-amarah* and also conscious soul which is *an-nafs al-lawwamah* and when these two are taken together, it can achieve peace through total commitment to faith.

Research indicates that spirituality and religiosity are positively linked with various aspects of well-being, including emotional, psychological and life satisfaction dimensions (Abd Aziz et al., 2024). Beyond traditional psychological models, spiritual fulfilment, a sense of purpose in life and healthy relationships are all considered aspects of well-being from an Islamic perspective (Ayman, 2024). Lastly, cultural and religious factors play a significant role in

shaping spiritual well-being, emphasizing that it encompasses identity, values and life meaning in addition to mental health (Al-Thani, 2025).

Methodology

This section describes the research design, population, sampling procedure, instrument and methods of analysis used to examine the relationships between Quranic engagement and reflection and students' perceived academic outcomes, moral behaviour and mental well-being.

Population and Sample

A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among Degree in Muamalat and Plus Tahfiz students at UiTM Kampus Machang. Data were collected at one point in time using a structured questionnaire comprising demographic questions and 10-point Likert-scale items. Because the design was cross-sectional, the analyses estimate statistical associations and group differences rather than causal effects.

The target population comprised 276 full-time students: 252 Degree in Muamalat students and 24 Plus Tahfiz students. Simple random sampling was planned using a complete student sampling frame and a random-number generator so that each eligible student had a known probability of selection. The questionnaire was administered electronically to the selected students through Google Forms.

The minimum sample size was estimated using the finite-population sample-size formula,

$$n = \frac{NZ^2p(1-p)}{e^2(N-1) + Z^2p(1-p)}$$

$$n = \frac{276(1.645)^2(0.5)(1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2(276-1) + (1.645)^2(0.5)(1-0.5)}$$

$$n = 136.89 \approx 137$$

which is equivalent to the Raosoft calculation. With $N = 276$, $z = 1.645$ for a 90% confidence level, $p = 0.50$ and $e = 0.05$, the required minimum sample was approximately 137 respondents. A total of 137 complete responses were therefore included. The 90% confidence level and the small numbers of respondents in the higher-memorisation groups are acknowledged when interpreting the precision and generalisability of the results (Cochran, 1977).

Primary data were collected from the selected full-time Degree in Muamalat and Plus Tahfiz students using a self-administered questionnaire created in Google Forms. The questionnaire link was sent electronically to facilitate participation across programmes and semesters. The instrument collected demographic information and quantitative responses concerning Quranic engagement and reflection, perceived academic outcomes, moral behaviour and mental well-being.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured bilingual questionnaire comprising demographic information and four multi-item constructs. Quranic engagement and reflection were measured

using five items covering regular reflection on Quranic meanings, efforts to understand Quranic wisdom, spiritual connection and application of Quranic guidance. Perceived academic outcomes were measured using six items concerning learning, memory, concentration, discipline and study habits. Moral behaviour was measured using nine items addressing honesty, respect, patience, helpfulness, responsibility, forgiveness and avoidance of unethical conduct. Mental well-being was measured using four items concerning calmness, anxiety reduction, emotional stability and management of negative emotions.

All construct items used a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). The items were researcher-developed and informed by the Quranic engagement, education, moral development and well-being literature reviewed for this study, with wording contextualised for Quranic memorisation and *tadabbur*. English and Malay versions were provided to facilitate respondents' understanding. The study records did not report a formal content validity index; content suitability was assessed during the supervisory review and pilot-testing process. This limitation is considered when interpreting the measurement results.

A pilot study involving 30 students was conducted to identify unclear or ambiguous items and assess internal consistency. Across the constructs, the pilot Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.908 to 0.984. In the actual sample, Cronbach's alpha was 0.865 for Quranic engagement and reflection, 0.933 for perceived academic outcomes, 0.968 for moral behaviour and 0.957 for mental well-being. These values exceeded the conventional 0.70 criterion and indicated satisfactory to excellent internal consistency. The academic construct comprised six items in the final questionnaire.

Method of Analysis

In this study, a blend of descriptive and inferential analyses was employed. Both analyses were conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.

Descriptive Analysis

In this study, the data were analysed using a frequency table with the aim of presenting the demographic profile of the respondents which includes gender, age, educational background, the number of Juz memorized and semester.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the direction and strength of the linear relationships between Quranic engagement and reflection and each outcome: perceived academic outcomes, moral behaviour and mental well-being. Coefficients range from -1 to +1, with the sign indicating direction and the absolute magnitude indicating the strength of the relationship. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = 0.05$.

$$r = \frac{\sum xy - \frac{(\sum x)(\sum y)}{n}}{\sqrt{\left[\sum x^2 - \frac{(\sum x)^2}{n}\right] \left[\sum y^2 - \frac{(\sum y)^2}{n}\right]}}$$

Where x's are academic performance, moral behaviour and mental health
y is reflecting and relationship with Al-Quran

If the $r = 0$, then the x and y variable are not correlated. the closer the r value to 1, the stronger the measures closeness to the linear relationship. (Zhou et al., 2016). The correlation and strength between the independent and dependent variables are shown in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Correlation and Strength of Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Pearson Correlation Coefficient, r	Strength	Relationship
0	None	None
Between -0.1 until -0.39	Weak	Negative
Between -0.4 until -0.69	Moderate	
Between -0.7 until -0.99	Strong	
-1	Perfect	
Between 0.1 until 0.39	Weak	Positive
Between 0.4 until 0.69	Moderate	
Between 0.7 until 0.99	Strong	
1	Perfect	

Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA)

Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was used to determine whether the combined means of perceived academic outcomes, moral behaviour and mental well-being differed across four memorisation levels after controlling for Quranic engagement and reflection. The interaction between memorisation level and the covariate was examined to assess the homogeneity-of-regression-slopes assumption. Box's M test and Levene's tests were used to evaluate covariance- and variance-homogeneity assumptions. All findings were interpreted as associations because respondents were not randomly assigned to memorisation groups.

Results and Findings

Descriptive Analysis

This study involved 137 respondents with 95 respondents are female and 42 respondents are male. Most of the respondents were 22 years old followed by 23, 21 and 24 years old while the smallest group was those aged 25. For educational background, The Sekolah Menengah Agama (SMA) or Sekolah Agama Menengah (SAM) has the highest student count with the value of 70 students (51.1%) significantly exceeding all other school. Moderate students' numbers are observed in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama (SMKA) with the value of 27 students (19.7%) and Sekolah Berasrama Penuh Integrasi (SBPI) with the value of 12 students (8.8%). While for the Kelas Aliran Agama (KAA) with the 5.8%, MRSM Ulul Albab with (5.1%), Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan (SABK) with 5.8% and Sekolah Agama Swasta with 3.6% have the lowest students count with less than 10 students.

For the number of Juz memorized, a majority with the value of 68 students (49.6%) have memorized less than one Juz of Al-Quran while 48 students (35%) have memorized between 1 and 10 Juz of Al-Quran. Only a small number of students have memorized more than 10 Juz or Al-Quran with the value 11 students (8%) and 10 students (7.3%) who memorized more between 21-30 Juz. Lastly, semester 5 has the highest count with the value of 37 students (27%) indicating that the most observations recorded for the semester, followed by semester 7 with the value of 30 students (21.9%) while there are no students from semester 2 answer this

questionnaire. Semester 3 and semester 4 have the least students with the value of 13(9.5%) and 14 students (10.2%). The results were summarized in Figure 1-5 below.

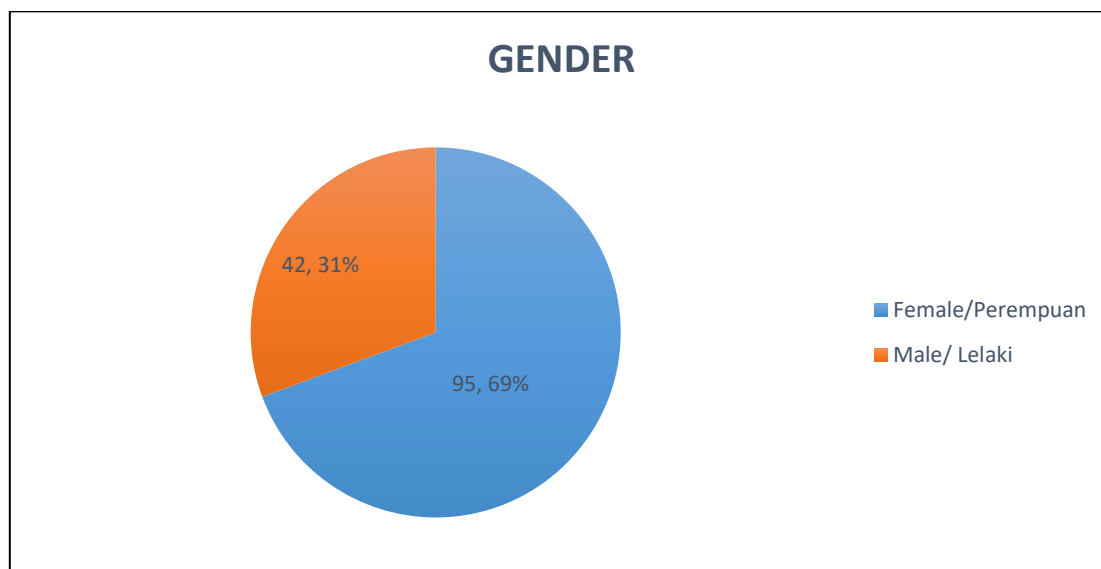


Figure 1: Gender of the Students

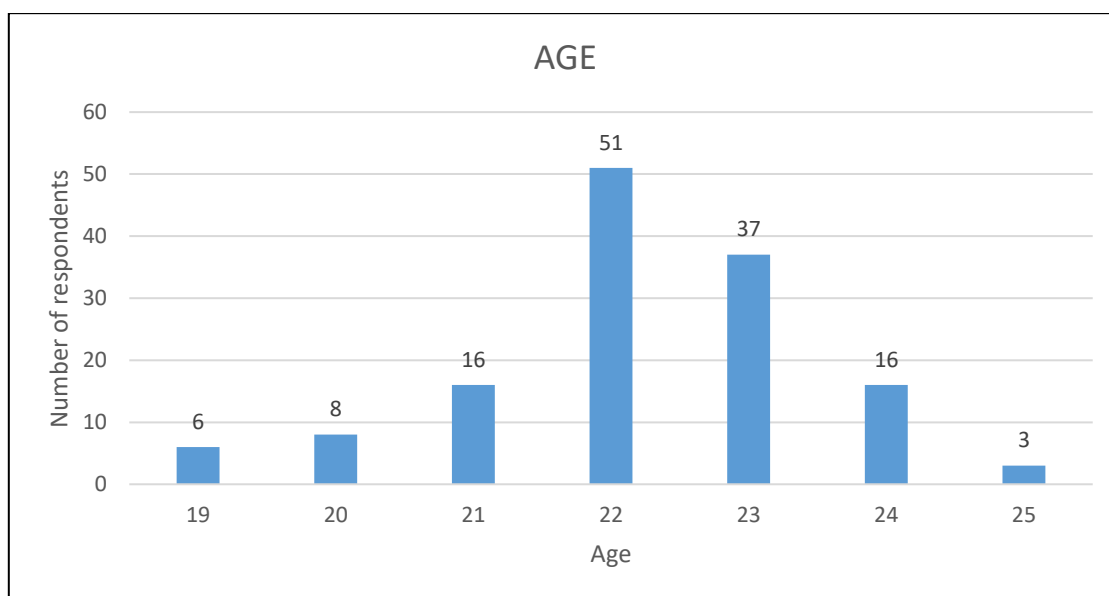


Figure 2: Age of the Students

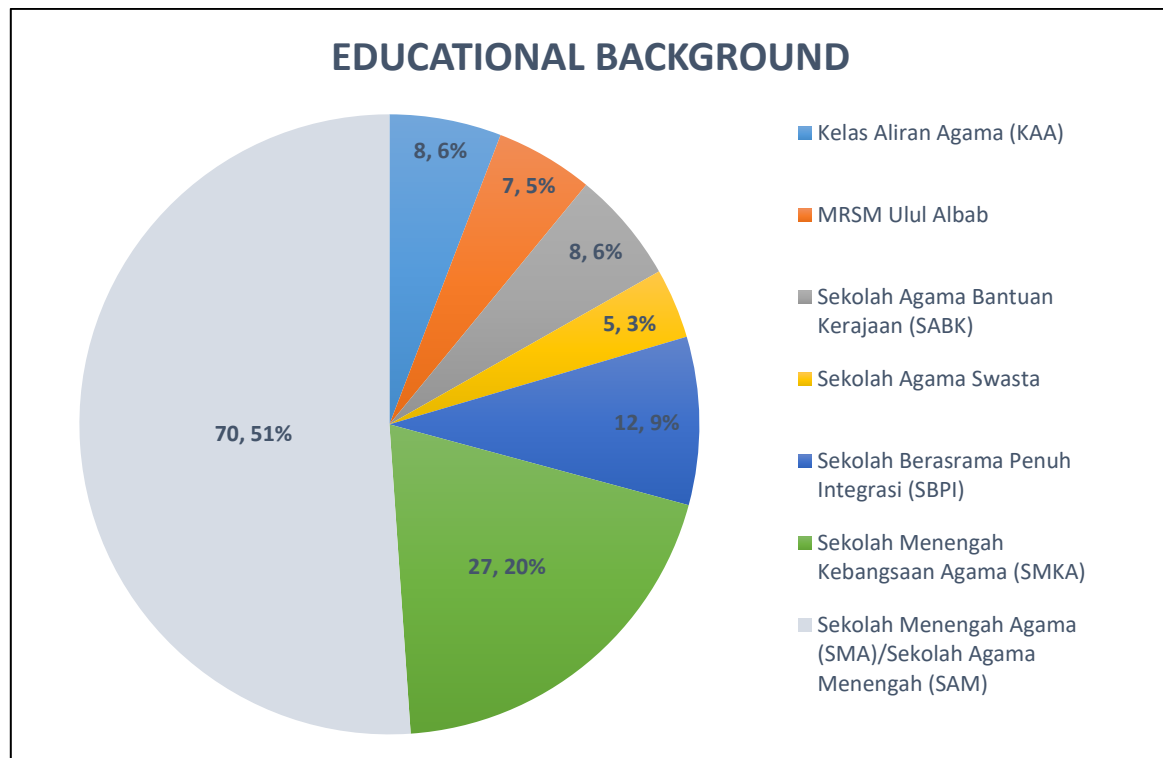


Figure 3: Educational Background

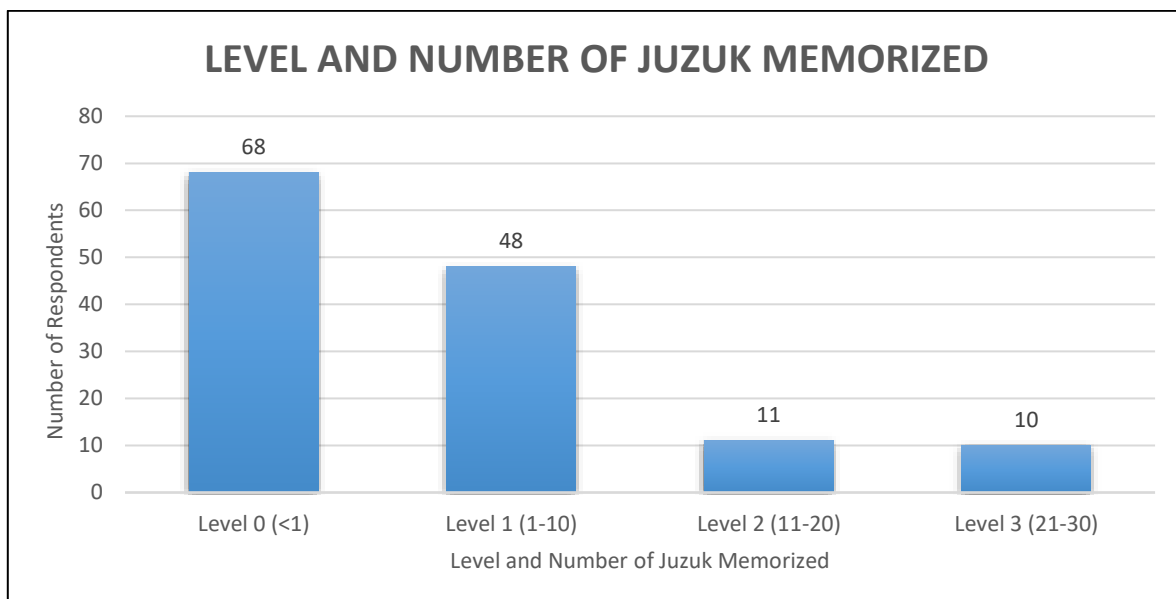


Figure 4: Level and Number of Juz Memorized

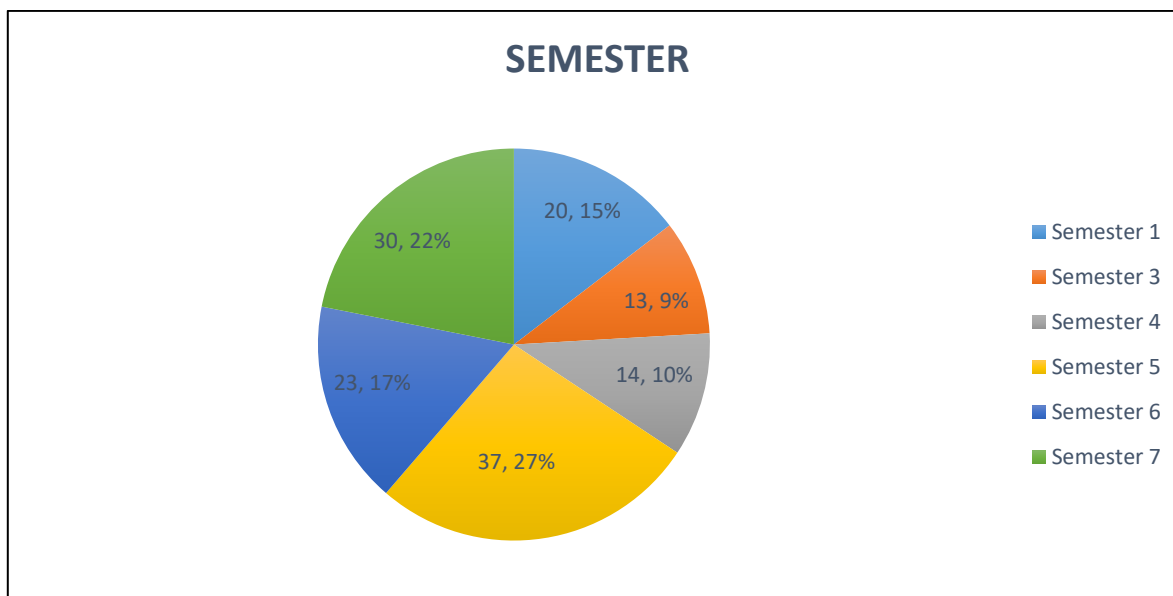


Figure 5: Semester of the Students

Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Pearson's correlation analysis showed statistically significant positive relationships between Quranic engagement and reflection and all three outcomes. The strongest relationship was observed with perceived academic outcomes ($r = 0.726, p < 0.001$), followed by moral behaviour ($r = 0.624, p < 0.001$) and mental well-being ($r = 0.580, p < 0.001$). The findings indicate that higher self-reported reflective Quranic engagement was associated with higher scores on the measured outcomes; they do not establish a causal direction.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Independent Variable	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig.(2-tailed)	Strength of Relationship
Academic Performance	0.726	0.000	Strong positive
Mental Health	0.580	0.000	Moderate positive
Moral Behaviour	0.624	0.000	Moderate positive

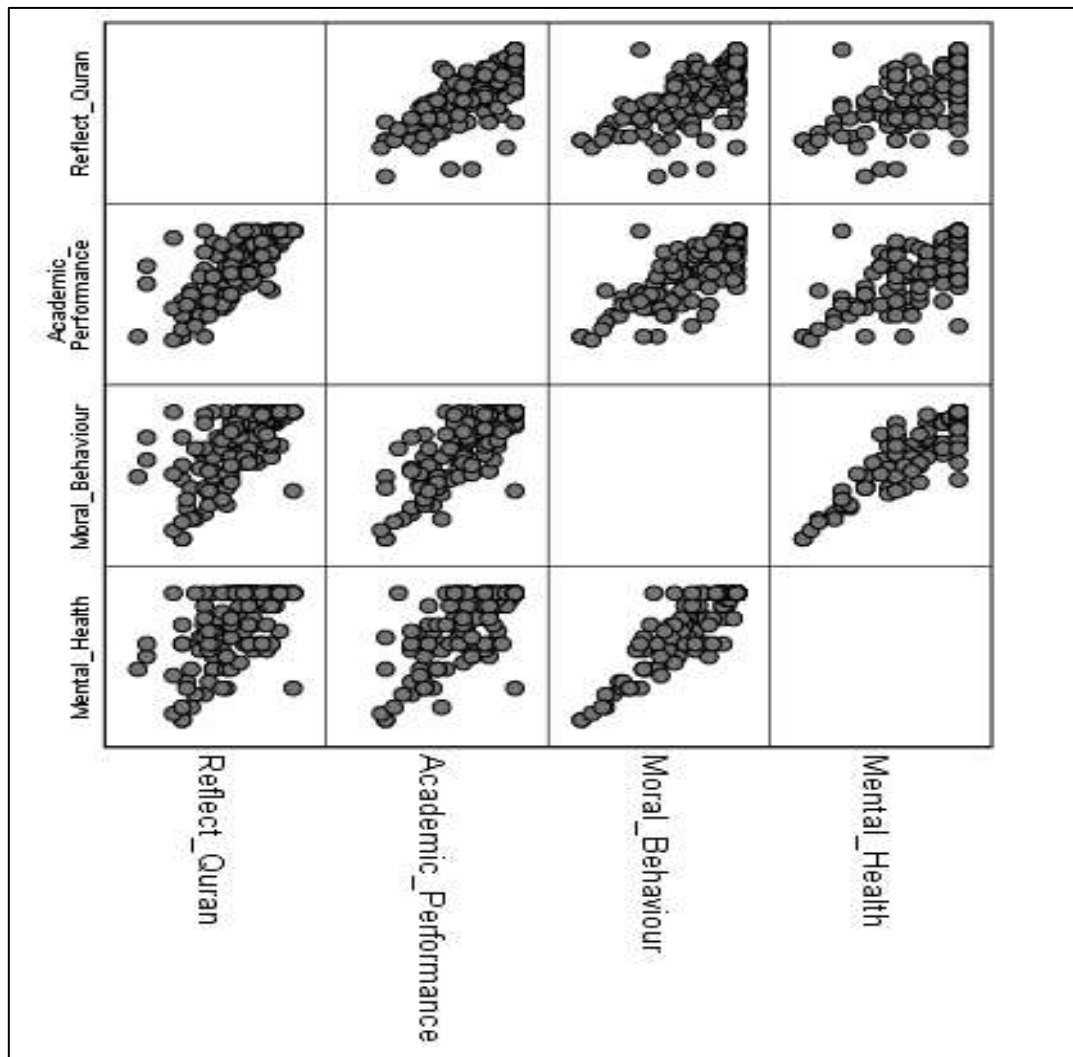


Figure 6: Correlation Matrix

Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA)

Table 4 below shows the box's test of equality of covariances matrices. Since the significance value in the box's test is $0.150 > 0.05$, the homogeneity is met.

Table 4: Box's Test of Equality of Covariances Matrices

Box's M	F	df1	df2	Sig.
26.596	1.343	18	3802.372	.150

Table 5 presents the multivariate tests. Memorisation level was not significantly associated with the combined means of perceived academic outcomes, moral behaviour and mental well-being after controlling for engagement and reflection ($F = 1.392, p = 0.191$). Quranic engagement and reflection were significantly associated with the combined outcomes ($F = 22.782, p < 0.001$). The interaction between memorisation level and the covariate was not significant ($F = 1.132, p = 0.339$), supporting the homogeneity-of-regression-slopes assumption.

Table 5: Multivariate Tests

Effect		F	Sig.
Level and number of juz memorized	Wilks' Lambda	1.392	0.191
Reflection and engagement on quranic verses	Wilks' Lambda	22.782	0.000
Level and number of juz memorized *reflection and engagement on quranic verses	Wilks' Lambda	1.132	0.339

This Levene's test examines whether the variances of each dependent variable are equal across the groups. Since the significance level for mental health is $0.520 > 0.05$, the homogeneity is met. However, for the academic ($p - value = 0.038$) and moral behavior ($p - value = 0.042$), the assumption is not met since the significance level is less than 0.05. This means that the variances for these two variables differ across the groups.

Table 6: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Academic performance	2.898	3	133	0.038
Moral behaviour	2.817	3	133	0.042
Mental health	0.758	3	133	0.520

The tests of between-subjects effects showed that memorisation level was not significantly associated with perceived academic outcomes ($F = 2.208, p = 0.090$), moral behaviour ($F = 2.647, p = 0.052$) or mental well-being ($F = 0.942, p = 0.423$). Quranic engagement and reflection were significantly associated with perceived academic outcomes ($F = 66.072, p < 0.001$), moral behaviour ($F = 40.488, p < 0.001$) and mental well-being ($F = 33.807, p < 0.001$). The memorisation-level-by-reflection interaction was not significant for any outcome. Because Levene's tests were significant for perceived academic outcomes and moral behaviour, their univariate results should be interpreted cautiously, particularly given the unequal group sizes.

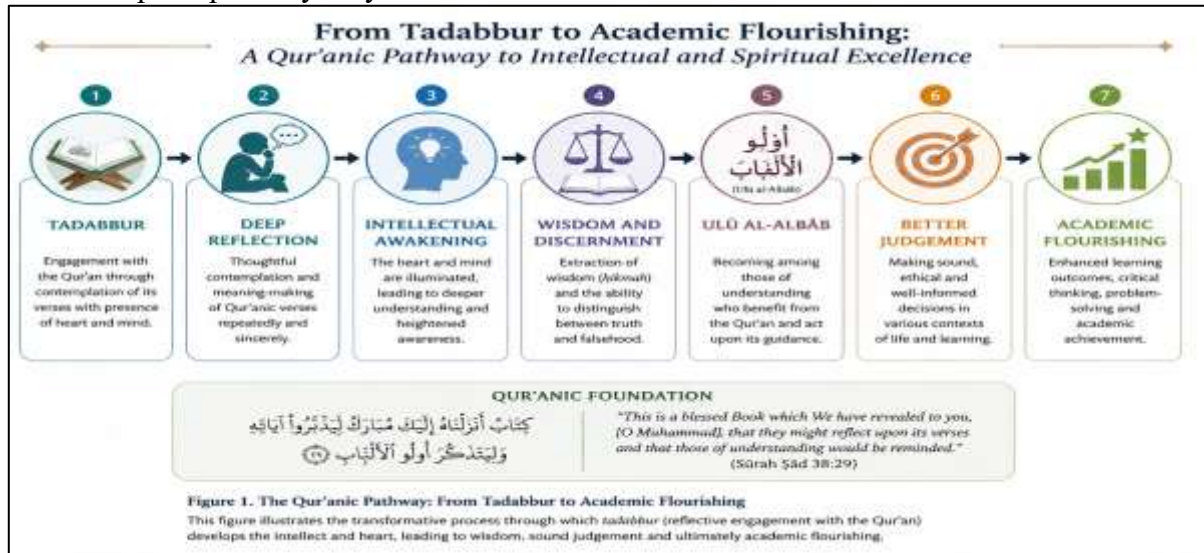
Table 7: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	F	Sig.
Level and number of juz memorized	Academic performance	2.208	0.090
	Moral behaviour	2.647	0.052
	Mental health	0.942	0.423
Reflection and engagement on quranic verses	Academic performance	66.072	0.000
	Moral behaviour	40.488	0.000
	Mental health	33.807	0.000
Level and number of juz memorized *reflection and engagement on quranic verses	Academic performance	1.974	0.121
	Moral behaviour	1.728	0.164
	Mental health	0.600	0.616

The significant positive association between Quranic engagement, particularly *tadabbur*, and academic performance may be interpreted through the Quranic framework of reflective learning. Allah states in Surah Sad, verses 29: “*This is a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, O Muhammad, that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded*”. This verse connects *tadabbur* with the development of *ulu al-albab*, namely individuals endowed with sound intellect and the capacity to derive meaningful lessons. Classical exegetes such as al-Tabari (n.d) and al-Sa’di (n.d) explain that *tadabbur* involves

contemplating the meanings, wisdom, and guidance of the Qur'an to acquire knowledge, understanding, and sound judgement. From this perspective, *tadabbur* may contribute to academic flourishing by nurturing reflective thinking, intellectual awareness, and the capacity to make thoughtful decisions.

The conceptual pathway may therefore be understood as:



While the present cross-sectional findings do not establish causality, they suggest that meaningful engagement with the Qur'an may have educational value that extends beyond memorisation and recitation.

Conclusions

This study examined the relationships between Quranic engagement and reflection and students' perceived academic outcomes, self-reported moral behaviour and mental well-being. Quranic engagement and reflection were positively correlated with all three outcomes. The MANCOVA results further showed that the combined outcomes did not differ significantly across memorisation levels after engagement and reflection were controlled, whereas the covariate was significantly associated with the combined outcomes. Thus, within this sample, reflective Quranic engagement was more consistently associated with the measured outcomes than the number of *juz* memorised. This finding should not be interpreted as evidence that memorisation is unimportant or that *tadabbur* causes improved outcomes.

Educational institutions, including but not limited to religious and *tahfiz* institutions, may consider complementing Quranic memorisation with structured opportunities for *tadabbur*. Such activities may help students relate Quranic principles to contemporary academic, ethical and personal challenges. This recommendation supports the integration of memorisation and reflective understanding rather than positioning the two practices as alternatives.

Student development and counselling units may also consider culturally and spiritually sensitive Quranic-reflection activities as a voluntary complement to established student-support services. However, the present study did not evaluate a clinical intervention or establish therapeutic effectiveness. *Tadabbur* activities should therefore not be presented as a replacement for professional psychological assessment or evidence-based mental health care.

Lastly, for the academic perspective, the future researchers should move toward longitudinal study designs. While this study provides a picture of the current relationship between variables, a longitudinal approach would track the students over several years to observe how the engagement and reflection on Quranic verses evolves as they transition from high school to university or the workforce. Additionally, qualitative research such as interviews is highly recommended to capture the live experiences of students. This would provide the deeper insights into the specific emotional and cognitive processes that transform Quranic reflection into a *Sakinah* which is spiritual peace.

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