HAFIZ EDUCATION IN WESTERN EUROPE: THE EXAMPLE OF THE NETHERLANDS

Abstract. Hafiz studies, rooted in the sacred tradition of memorizing the Qur'an, have persevered throughout the history of the Islamic religion. This comprehensive study takes a deep dive into the implementation of Hafiz education in the Netherlands, shedding light on how it intertwines with the formal education system. It explores the multifaceted landscape of Hafiz education, uncovering both the challenges it faces and the level of success achieved by the students engaged in this spiritual journey. Additionally, this research delves into the historical evolution of the Hafiz institution, tracing its origins and development over time.

Utilizing a meticulous approach encompassing document analysis and qualitative interviews, this study underscores the paramount importance of Hafiz studies in nurturing individuals destined for roles in the imamate and various other religious services. Of particular interest is the experience of young children, who may have limited exposure to a diverse range of entertainment and opportunities, making the cultivation of an environment conducive to uninterrupted study a formidable task.

The study's overarching conclusion highlights the intricate nature of maintaining an environment where children can fully engage in uninterrupted Hafiz studies. Consequently, it advocates for the establishment of a balanced education system that not only encompasses religious education but also incorporates psychological and social activities. This holistic approach aims to strike a harmonious equilibrium, eliminating the undue pressure that may arise from the concurrent pursuit of formal schooling and religious education.

Furthermore, this research offers valuable insights into the number of students who have undergone Hafiz training, providing a detailed analysis of their current pursuits and the profound impact of Hafiz education on their academic achievements. By presenting a nuanced and comprehensive perspective, this study...
enriches our understanding of the role of Hafiz studies within the educational framework of the Netherlands, providing a roadmap for the effective integration of this sacred discipline into the lives of students committed to this noble path.

Keywords: Religion, Islam, Hafiz, Evolvement, Education.

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OSVITA HAFIZIV U ZAHIDNII YEVROPI: PРИКЛАД НІДЕРЛАНДІВ

Анотація. Навчання хафізу, спрямоване на запам'ятовування Корану, має багаторічну історію, яка відзначається ще з моменту виникнення ісламської релігії. У своєму висновковому дослідженні, дана студія глибоко досліджує процес освіти хафіза в контексті Нідерландів, досліджуючи при цьому його інтеграцію з формальною освітою в країні. Головною метою цього дослідження є розкриття проблем, з якими зіштовхуються студенти, які обирають цей шлях навчання, а також оцінка рівня їхнього успіху в цьому процесі.

Ця наукова робота також пропонує історичний огляд і еволюцію інституту хафіза в ісламському світі. Шляхом аналізу документів та проведення якісних інтерв'ю, дослідники розкривають значущі моменти в становленні та розвитку цієї освітньої практики. Важливою думкою, яка виникає з цього дослідження, є необхідність розглядати навчання хафізів як важливий аспект виховання осіб, які призначаються на релігійні посади, такі як імами та інші релігійні службовці.

 Особливо важливим є розгляд навчання хафізів в дитячому віці. Діти, яким бракує широкого спектру розваг та можливостей, потребують спеціального середовища для постійного навчання. Однак дослідження підкреслює, що створення такого середовища виявляється складною задачею.

Відповідно до висновків дослідження, рекомендується розробити збалансовану освітню систему, яка враховує не лише формальну шкільну освіту, а й релігійне навчання. Така система має бути підкріпленна психологічною та соціальною підтримкою, щоб уникнути надмірного навантаження на студентів.

Окрім того, ця робота рекомендує провести оцінку результатів навчання хафізів, визначити кількість студентів, які успішно завершили цей процес, вивчити їхні подальші заняття та проаналізувати вплив навчання хафіза на їхні академічні досягнення.

Підсумково, це дослідження розкриває важливі аспекти навчання хафізів, його історичний розвиток та вплив на формальну освіту. Воно наочно
вказує на необхідність глибокого аналізу та постійного розвитку системи, спрямованої на навчання хафізів, забезпечуючи при цьому гармонійний баланс між релігійною та загальноосвітньою підготовкою студентів. Це дослідження, об'єднавши аналіз документів і якісні інтерв'ю, вирізняється високою академічною важливістю, оскільки воно розширює наше розуміння ролі хафізських студій у контексті освітньої системи Нідерландів. Воно пропонує практичні рекомендації щодо оптимального поєднання цінних аспектів релігійного навчання та загальної освіти для досягнення найкращих результатів для студентів, що обирають цей святий шлях.

Ключові слова: релігія, іслам, хафіз, еволюція, освіта.

**Introduction.** In Surah Luqman, 31:20; Allah created humans and provided the means for them to live on Earth (1). As stated in Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:87, in this life, He appointed prophets among them to encourage virtuous deeds and guide them away from wrongdoing (1). According to Islamic belief, Surah Al-Ahzab, 33:40, the final prophet appointed was Prophet Muhammad Mustaфa (1). While fulfilling his role as a guide, Surah Taha, 20:99, Allah bestowed the Qur'an upon Muhammad as the holy book (1). The Qur'an, being the foremost and most significant source of Islam, is memorized by many hafiz today, just as it was in the past (38). As stated in Surah Al-Hijr, 15:9 Allah has proclaimed that the Qur'an will be preserved until the Day of Judgment (1).

Prophet Muhammad memorized the revealed verses of the Qur'an and encouraged believers to do the same. During that era, the Companions who memorized the Qur'an were regarded as special and treated accordingly. A notable instance of this is witnessed in the burial of martyrs from the Battle of Uhud, where those who memorized the most Qur'anic verses were given precedence in burial (17).

The memorization of the Qur'an holds a significant place in Muslim history, with Prophet Muhammad providing numerous statements of encouragement on the matter. "The most honorable among my ummah are those who memorize the Qur'an," he said (40).

The Qur'an was revealed over a span of 23 years. As the revelations continued during the time of Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an was not compiled into a single volume. It was under the leadership of Hz. Abu Bakr, due to concerns about memory loss resulting from wars and the fear of forgetting, that a committee was established to compile the Qur'an into a single volume. Subsequently, during the reign of Hz. Uthman, as the Muslim community spread across vast territories, copies of the Qur'an were duplicated. All revelations received during the time of Prophet Muhammad were documented (10). Since it was essential to preserve these records orally, both the Prophet and his companions committed the revelations to memory (14). Zayd bin Thabit was among those who memorized the entire Qur'an. In reference to
him, the Prophet said, "Zayd is the one who is most knowledgeable and memorizes the Qur'an best." He instructed (18).

**Statement of the problem.** This tradition continued beyond the Prophet's era, evolving into the concept known as "Hafiz of the Qur'an." Institutions for memorizing the Qur'an, referred to as Hafiz courses, were established, and special esteem was shown to those who attained the status of Hafiz. Throughout history, Hafiz individuals have consistently held a revered position within society.

The act of memorizing the Qur'an brings forth profound blessings, as expressed by Prophet Muhammad. Those who commit the Qur'an to memory receive the glad tidings of heavenly crowning, the potential to intercede for ten of their kin, and the accumulation of substantial spiritual rewards (42). In both Islamic society and scholarly circles, being a hafiz is regarded as an important distinction. In the contemporary world, technological advancements have made it possible to identify specific words or verses from the Qur'an and determine their corresponding surah. Presently, the Qur'an can even be accessed and read via mobile phones. Despite these advancements, the significance of becoming a hafiz remains intact in pursuit of the aforementioned blessings.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Given the prominent role of hafiz activities in the Muslim tradition, scholarly investigations pertaining to this practice assume considerable importance. The imperative lies in conducting studies that enhance the quality and quantity of the hafiz tradition, particularly in societies where Muslims constitute a minority. In this context, our current study, which focuses on hafiz activities within the Netherlands—a locale inhabited by a noteworthy Muslim community—contributes to the existing body of research in this domain. This endeavor seeks to address questions concerning the execution of hafiz training activities, the continuation of children's education, parental support, the impact of these endeavors on children's socialization, the tally of trained hafizes thus far, and the methodologies employed.

**The purpose of the article.** The study intends to elucidate the historical evolution of memorization, underscore fundamental concepts related to memorization, and convey the outcomes of reciprocal interviews conducted with both students and parents. Furthermore, this research aims to uncover how hafiz education is undertaken in a society where Muslims constitute a minority—contrasting with the majority-Muslim environments where similar studies have traditionally taken place. Through this comparative lens, the study endeavors to enrich our understanding of hafiz activities in varying societal contexts.

**Presenting main material.**

**Hafiz Studies from the Golden Age (Asr-i Saadet) to the Present**

The term "hafiz" originates from the Arabic root H-F-Z and signifies the act of memorization (27). The Qur'an, the sacred text of Islam, has been committed to
memory since its early days, a tradition that endures through various epochs up to the contemporary era (7). The inception of memorization endeavors dates back to the initial revelation of the Qur'an. In this context, the archetypal teacher was the Angel Gabriel, and the inaugural student was Prophet Muhammad. Our Prophet dictated the Qur'an as imparted by Gabriel, transmitting it to appointed scribes of revelation, who, in turn, disseminated it to his companions. This dual approach aimed to ensure the preservation of the Qur'an through both written records and cognitive memorization (2).

**The Discipline of Hafiz and Recitation:**

The Qur'an's preservation extended beyond inscription, encompassing memorization during the Prophet's time. Elements that couldn't be transcribed were memorized and conveyed to succeeding generations based on the Prophet's oral teachings. This was crucial, given the distinct dialects of the Arab societies at that juncture (21). The resultant seven canonical recitations emerged as a pedagogical pursuit in subsequent epochs. Notably, these readings maintain semantic coherence and fidelity. In the early period of the Qur'an, the absence of punctuation heightened the significance of hafiz, as they eliminated sources of misinterpretation. This aspect became particularly relevant considering the conversion of non-Arabic speakers to Islam. Subsequently, the discipline of recitation associated with the Qur'an's verbal rendition emerged. Individuals who memorized the complete Qur'an and mastered the science of recitation earned the designation "Kurra Hafiz" (3).

Notably, hafiz studies in the Netherlands have yet to reach the same advanced stage. Given the necessity for those pursuing the science of recitation to be hafiz, conducting this study in the Netherlands is essential. This is due to the Quranic education being transmitted orally. In addition to the conventional teacher-student dynamic, a pedagogical approach emphasizing auditory and practical learning would be more advantageous.

**Perspectives on the Necessity of Hafiz Training:**

Hafiz training represents a rigorous, disciplined endeavor that demands significant self-sacrifice. However, the potential rewards are substantial. The prophetic tradition affirms, "The individual who recites and preserves the Qur'an will hear, 'Recite and ascend! Recite melodiously, just as you did in the world! Your station will be at the end of the verse you recite.'" (42).

Attaining the status of a hafiz is not universally attainable, as it necessitates a commendable level of intelligence. Furthermore, the instructor must be a subject expert and a hafiz themselves (36). An established practice during the time of our Prophet was to appoint the individual with the most Qur'anic memorization as the prayer leader. Throughout various responsibilities, priority was accorded to hafiz individuals.
For Islamic scholars, being a hafiz carries significant importance. Hafiz individuals substantially contribute to citing Qur'anic evidence. Memorization forms an essential bridge between verses, facilitating adept evaluation of events by applying human cognitive analysis to draw relevant conclusions.

In several Islamic nations, full hafiz status is requisite for admission to faculties or departments, while in others, memorizing one-third of the Qur'an suffices (As revealed through interviews with students at Egypt's Al-Azhar University). Having a hafiz lead the taraweeh prayers during Ramadan, an indispensable practice, is found to be more impactful (37). Hafiz individuals possess a distinct advantage in substantiating life's inquiries through Qur'anic references. With the Qur'an ingrained in their memory, they are more adept at addressing topics during sermon programs when necessary. Certainly, hafiz students enhance their professional capacity through comprehensive knowledge of Qur'anic recitation, guidance, and tajweed practices. Moreover, hafizes possess superior capability in reciting various parts during prayers and conveying broader messages effectively.

**Key Hafiz-Related Concepts:**

- **Kari (kārī):** The term denotes "one who recites the Qur'an" in a general context, derived from the root of qiraat (41).
- **Tilavet (Recitation):** Refers to the act of reciting the Qur'an with tajweed (correct pronunciation) and tertîl (melodious rhythm) (41).
- **Tertil:** A tajweed term, signifying the most melodious and accurate recitation method (41).
- **Galat (Kalet):** The state of erroneously learning the correct pronunciation, movement, or tajweed recitation methods of letters in the Qur'an (41).
- **Ham (Raw):** The initial memorization of a page.
- **Has (Baked):** A page that has been previously memorized.
- **Haslama:** The process of reviewing and re-memorizing.
- **Return:** Re-memorization beginning from the first juz after completing a page from each section of the Qur'an.
- **Tal'ım:** Refers to the reading of the first ten parts (juz) or the entire Qur'an after achieving the status of Hafiz (19).
- **Tahkik:** The act of meticulously reciting the medd-i munfasil (intermediate pause) with slow cadence, according each letter its proper emphasis (15).
- **Hadr:** Denotes the rapid recitation of the Qur'an (15).
- **Tedvir:** Represents an intermediate recitation level positioned between Tahqik and Hadr. In this style, two or three "elîf" amounts are included within medd-i munfasils (15).
- **Aşere-i Takrib:** Involves the recitation of the Qur'an by following the recitation of ten imams (15).

**Methods Employed in Hafiz Training:**
Method 1: In this approach, prior to embarking on memorization, individuals undertake a thorough reading of the Qur'an. An assessment is conducted to determine the time required for a prospective hafiz, or someone identified by their instructor, to properly read a page using the verification, tedvir, and hadr techniques. If a person completes reading a page within two minutes using the Hadr method, they undergo a memory test. Subsequently, the time taken by the student to memorize a page per day is assessed. Should a student memorize a page in half a day, they proceed to the memorization test. Initially, students are tasked with memorizing shorter suras from the thirtieth juz. Once this phase is successfully completed, students are directed to memorize the last page of each juz, progressing sequentially from the first juz to the thirtieth. This method involves providing students with a two-page lesson, where the second page of each section and the previously memorized first page are reiterated. This process continues, with memorization expanding alongside the accumulation of pages. The progression continues until the twentieth page of each section is reached, culminating in the completion of memorization (29).

Method 2: In this technique, students initiate memorization from the opening sura of the Qur'an. Upon memorizing a quarter of the Qur'an, the student recites the pages they have already committed to memory. Following this, the remaining surahs are re-recited. Upon reaching the halfway mark, a revision (haslama) is performed. Subsequently, new surahs are memorized from this midpoint, and hafiz training persists through this method until the entire Qur'an is memorized (29).

In Turkey, an Islamic country where hafiz training is provided, a project was initiated after 2012 (22) in conjunction with formal education (Ministry of National Education, Formal Education Project on Memory with Formal Education, 2018). Collaborating with the Presidency of Religious Affairs, this endeavor permits students to temporarily suspend their education for one year while focusing on memorization. If they feel prepared at the year's end, they can take exams for the missed courses and continue their academic journey without a lapse. If students are unable to concurrently manage school studies and hafiz memorization, they resume their education from the point of interruption.

This approach facilitates memory completion within the school and social context, eliminating the need to separate from these environments. A similar framework is also adopted for hafiz studies in Western Europe, with the distinction that children engage in memory training alongside their regular schooling, without disrupting their education.

Expected Qualities of a Quran Hafiz: Throughout history, from antiquity to the present, discernible expectations have existed concerning the qualifications and responsibilities demanded of both instructors and students engaged in hafiz training. Islamic education places value upon qualities such as intelligence, a thirst for knowledge, patience, piety, humility, and the application of acquired knowledge (6).
The anticipated behaviors from an individual who has memorized the Qur'an encompass the following aspects:
- Learning the Provisions of the Qur'an,
- Comprehending the Intended Meanings of Verses,
- Gaining Insight from Memorized Verses,
- Applying the Memorized Verses in Practice (13).

MEMORY EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NETHERLANDS

Evolution of Hafiz Activities in the Netherlands:

During the initial phase of Muslim migration to the Netherlands as guest workers, religious education primarily focused on Qur'anic literacy and the art of recitation (44). Subsequent periods expanded the curriculum to encompass matters of faith, worship, the life of the Prophet Muhammad, and teachings of Islamic ethical principles (11). Within the framework of educational councils, the absence of memorization within religious education was identified as a significant shortfall (20). Weekend classes constitute the mainstay of religious education for students, typically scheduled on Saturdays and Sundays. However, this format alone proves inadequate for memorization due to its demand for sustained focus and dedication (5). Non-governmental organizations have organized contests promoting Qur'anic recitation excellence (20).

Weekend religious education programs in the Netherlands garner recognition for their structured approach. Curriculum materials, pedagogical order, and facility arrangements contribute to a methodical educational process. Organizational coordination amongst parents, students, and educators ensures efficacy. Through consistent training efforts, a measure of quality has been attained, enabling diversified education. While these programs predominantly focus on fundamental religious knowledge and Qur'an instruction, discussions about hafiz training have emerged. Parental demands and students' longing for hafiz training have recurrently surfaced, often from devout families and students who regularly attend the mosque. This enthusiasm from students, coupled with educators' support, prompted administrative consideration (20).

Simultaneously, a recognition arose regarding the necessity to address the non-governmental organizations' need for Qur'an educators and to establish a robust platform for students aspiring to pursue Theology Faculties. Given the absence of prior experience in this realm, the decision to embark on this initiative encountered initial uncertainty.

Ahmet Kaya Hodja, a hafiz associated with the North Holland Milli Görüş Islamic Federation branch—a non-governmental organization based in the Netherlands with a focus on Islamic affairs—brings substantial experience in cultivating hafiz individuals. In June 2010, at his own behest, he assumed a role appointed by the federation authorities. The initiation of this endeavor was preceded by a comprehensive feasibility study, alongside the formulation of a comprehensive...
action plan and a meticulously crafted memory program. Following these preparatory stages, requisite approval was sought and secured from the federation's governing body.

The inaugural stride toward this initiative was taken in collaboration with Oktay Dalmaz, the Education President of the Federation, and Imam Hatibi Ahmet Kaya, the Branch Imam. Commencing in the first phase, a meticulously devised plan for hafiz training was set into motion, welcoming an initial cohort of five aspiring hafiz students. The emergence of this hafiz program stems from the collective aspirations of students, parents, hafiz enthusiasts among educators, and the steadfast support garnered from the Dutch Islamic Federation.

In an effort to enhance students' cognitive abilities and bolster their enthusiasm within the context of hafiz education, educators offer support and devise solutions to address students' challenges. Through social activity programs, students are afforded opportunities for mental relaxation and their recreational needs are catered to.

Consequently, the study instigated by the Islamic Federation of North Holland has ignited a trend observed among other Muslim civil society organizations undertaking parallel endeavors. Notably, students who have effectively concluded their hafiz training within the Netherlands have achieved remarkable success in the Hafiz Examination organized by the Presidency of Religious Affairs, administered at the Cologne DITIB Headquarters. These accomplished individuals have rightfully earned their hafiz certificates as a testament to their diligence and dedication.

The count of students who have accomplished their hafiz training, triumphantly cleared their examinations, and been awarded their hafiz certificates within the North Holland region, categorized by years, is as follows: 2014: 6, 2015: 9, 2016: 7, 2017: 8, 2018: 9, 2019: 7, 2020: 8, 2021: 6, and 2022: 3. This information is provided in the format specified by Siddieq Oost Headteacher Lidwiene Weitje (Oemhani), situated at Sumatra Plantsoen 15, Amsterdam.

### Table 1. Hafiz Courses and Number of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam Selimiye</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amsterdam Kübra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amsterdam West</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amesfort</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hilversum</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zaandam</td>
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<td>Utrecht</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rotterdam Birlik</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
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This study has played a pivotal role in instigating hafiz training in other Western European countries. These endeavors demonstrate that residing in a Muslim-majority nation isn't a prerequisite for becoming a hafiz. This education can be effectively pursued in non-Muslim countries by operating within daytime systems for specific durations, while simultaneously engaging in mainstream education within those countries' schools.

**PROCEDURES AND PRINCIPLES OF HAFIZ EDUCATION**

*Procedures and Considerations in Hafiz Training*

Hafiz training follows a structured process involving preliminary preparation, readiness, and memorization stages. During the preliminary phase, students are tasked with reading the Qur'an accurately and memorizing shorter surahs. Techniques for effective memorization are introduced at this stage, which spans six months. The readiness phase focuses on enhancing reading speed, aiming for error-free page reading in under two minutes. This phase is divided into two six-month segments. In the third phase, spanning another six months, students are required to memorize the 30th juz, along with surahs Yasin, Mulk, Hucurat, Fetih, and Rahman. The objective is for students to memorize one page daily. A memorization exam follows this phase, assessing three random places in the Qur'an for recitation and posing two questions of varying memory lengths for scoring. Based on this assessment, students begin their actual memorization journey.

This journey involves a 35-day rotation, where one page from each juz is memorized daily, followed by two pages with one page from the first juz being a "raw" page. This cycle is repeated 20 times, culminating in the completion of all 30 juz. The memory consolidation continues during holidays. Some students even manage to memorize five or six pages of "raw" material daily. The Dutch implementation of the Hafiz program harmoniously integrates with mainstream education due to the numerous breaks it offers, thus facilitating effective memorization. Hafiz training encompasses 20 hours weekly, featuring one hour of religious instruction and another devoted to learning recitation sciences.

Upon completion of hafiz training, students continue revisiting their memorized content daily, covering 20 pages per lesson. Additionally, students are required to complete six full recitations ("hatims") before being eligible for the memory exam. For students preparing for the memory exam, supplementary competitions are organized. These competitions reward students who recite five juz concurrently and further reward those who complete three 10-juz sessions. The ultimate objective, a considerable achievement, is the continuous recitation of the entire Qur'an from start to finish in a single session. Notably, a female student in the Netherlands accomplished this feat in front of her teacher, while a student from the Mevlana hafiz course in Düsseldorf, Germany, achieved this milestone during a recitation broadcast on Camia TV.
Characteristics and Requirements of Teachers

The teaching profession necessitates possessing numerous qualities (26). In the context of hafiz training, educators must be adequately equipped. Undoubtedly, the primary prerequisite for hafiz training is that the instructor is a hafiz. Additionally, proficiency in reciting the Qur'an with proper maqam is essential (33). Beyond these, educators are expected to embody the ethical values of the Qur'an, approach their profession with conscientiousness, seek rewards solely from Allah, exhibit honesty, abstain from calculations, exhibit requisite attention towards students, concern themselves with students' challenges, and offer assistance in lesson preparation (43). While assembling the instructional team, care is taken to create a mix of youthful and experienced members. This approach fosters team spirit, allows young educators to address certain student issues more easily, and empowers seasoned educators to handle complex situations through their accumulated experience.

Initiating Hafiz Training

Distinct meetings were convened with the branch administrator, imam, and parents of prospective hafiz students. The significance of the initiative and relevant considerations were underscored. Given the moral gravity of this endeavor and its experimental nature, the significance it warranted was emphasized. Attendees displayed genuine enthusiasm and a thirst for knowledge. Following these informative sessions, the training commencement date was announced, and registrations were initiated. An examination was conducted for registered candidates to ascertain those suitable for hafiz training. These processes were overseen by a dedicated committee. The hafiz curriculum was introduced to both students and parents. Despite reiterating parental obligations, initial challenges surfaced involving instructors, parents, and students. Swift solutions were devised through regular reporting, weekly reviews, and frequent evaluation meetings. The approach adopted was characterized by teamwork and a unified spirit (20).

At that time, Oktay Dalmaz, who headed the federation's education sector, stated, "While progress was underway, some students initiated memorization but subsequently discontinued. However, students and parents showed remarkable resolve and determination throughout the process. Parents would bring their children to the course early, educators greeted them with smiles, and their motivation was sustained through prayers. As days progressed, students' familiarity with the Qur'an deepened, with preliminary tests involving reciting short surahs as homework. Those successfully passing this stage were permitted to commence hafiz training. The success of these efforts resonated in other branches as well. They expressed interest in initiating similar programs in their respective locations. Nonetheless, we opined that launching such initiatives in other branches without observable outcomes might not be advisable, urging other branches to wait. The achievements of certain
students, who managed to complete memorization within 13 to 14 months, indeed thrilled us. Subsequently, the decision was made to extend these initiatives to other branches."

Yet, while this approach facilitated progress in hafiz training, it also elicited certain drawbacks. The intensive focus on memorization resulted in a deficiency of religious education. Consequently, it was resolved to incorporate religious education sessions alongside hafiz training.

**Studies on Understanding the Qur'an**

The Qur'an serves as a guide for life, containing verses that nurture mature believers, instill principles, regulate interpersonal relationships, and emphasize the importance of contributing to humanity (9). To fully grasp the Qur'an's content, significance must be placed on comprehension alongside memorization (39). In the Netherlands, hafiz students engage in specific studies to comprehend the Qur'an. Selected verses covering belief, worship, ethics, and human relationships are explored, emphasizing their meanings and their relevance in contemporary society. Moreover, students are encouraged to develop an understanding of the entire Qur'an through translation reading.

The Qur'an was revealed to an Arabic-speaking society. However, Islam is a universal faith, and the Qur'an's message extends to all of humanity. Consequently, those not proficient in Arabic need to learn the language to understand this sacred text. Individuals who memorize the Qur'an in its entirety and achieve the status of hafiz should also focus on comprehending the memorized verses. Establishing a connection with the meanings of the stored texts holds paramount importance. Given this, learning Arabic becomes essential to fathom the Qur'an's depths. Notably, the hafiz studies in the Netherlands do not include Arabic instruction. Although these students, who concurrently pursue regular education, commit the Qur'an to memory and attain hafiz status, the need to engage in studies for comprehending the memorized content remains crucial. A thorough understanding of the study will require time. As such, it is recommended to concentrate on topics concerning faith, worship, and morality.

The primary objective is to relate the Qur'an's teachings to real life, a practice exemplified during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. He embodied the Qur'an's teachings in his actions, thus reflecting its principles in daily life. In the societal context of that era, Qur'anic verses held the utmost importance in addressing challenges and offering solutions (30).

While some children who undergo hafiz studies in Islamic nations may integrate their memorization into their professional lives, the focus remains on otherworldly gains. In the case of the Netherlands, while most of these children might not pursue religious duties or education professionally, they ardently commit to memorizing the Qur'an. Their dedication to this endeavor stems solely from the
anticipation of rewards from Allah. This authentic and earnest dedication holds tremendous significance.

**Studies on Completed Memorization**

In the Netherlands, students who complete their hafiz training are encouraged to reinforce their memorization through continuous repetition. Sustained repetition prevents the Qur'an from fading from memory. To this end, the establishment of hafiz evolution (consolidation) courses was decided upon. These courses were structured with a curriculum, prescribed textbooks, class arrangements, and pilot implementations within the North Holland Islamic Federation.

Efforts have been initiated in the Netherlands to provide advanced hafiz training for students who have completed their memorization. Educator training is offered to equip them for roles as Qur'an instructors or memory assistant teachers. Opportunities for further education are facilitated at institutions such as the Mainz Vocational School of Theology in Germany, Belgium's Imam Hatip High School, Berkamen Education Academy, and the Austrian Islamic Institute. Moreover, a practice akin to mukabele reading is held during Ramadan, with similar activities occurring outside the month. These endeavors aim to not only preserve the hafiz's memorization but also prepare them for their forthcoming responsibilities. Additionally, memory retention is fostered through the organization of revision days three times a week for female students.

**Hafiz Education Model Along with Formal Education**

Memorization is a focused undertaking that demands exclusive attention. Accomplishing it simultaneously with other commitments is no simple task. In Islamic nations, school curricula are often paused to accommodate hafiz training. Students can temporarily halt their formal education for about a year when opting to become a hafiz. After completing this training, they seamlessly resume their education. However, the scenario differs in the Netherlands. Students aspiring to be hafiz while continuing their regular school education must juggle both pursuits concurrently. This situation is intricate to manage. Students must excel in school subjects while ensuring uninterrupted hafiz lessons, which may occasionally lead to disruptions in both domains. The location of the memory courses, often distant from students' residences, further contributes to time loss. During a parent meeting, some mentioned traveling up to 35 km to attend memory courses. On weekdays, students attend school, rest for an hour at home after school, and are then transported by their families to the memory course. Following the lesson, they return home to rest. The cycle resumes with school the next morning, leading to evenings filled with memory courses, lessons preparation, and homework. This cycle extends until the day's end, with parents assisting with unfinished memorization at home. To motivate their children, parents describe studying alongside them, working at the same table, and being present for support day and night. They make adjustments in their lives,
refraining from television, visitors, and vacations, all to foster an environment conducive to memorization.

**Technological Opportunities Used**

Technological resources are harnessed to enhance memorization techniques. Equipping each student with a computer is a priority. The process starts with students listening to the portion they will memorize from their computer, following the text visually as it is read aloud ten times. Subsequently, they read it to their teacher, and upon successful reading, they are permitted to memorize the page. The process entails listening to the page verse by verse from the computer, repeating it with visual cues, and then attempting to memorize it. This method is replicated for the entire page. Another technique involves projecting a page onto a screen, with students collectively reading and memorizing verse by verse. This method encourages joint recitation, starting from the first verse. Another application presents a verse on screen, read aloud and repeated by students, promoting collective memorization. The verse is then removed, and those who have memorized it repeat it. This process continues through the entire page. These practices emphasize multi-sensory learning, enhancing the durability and accuracy of memorization.

**Positive-Negative Effects of Hafiz on School Lessons**

In discussions with parents, they cited both positive and negative impacts of memory education on school lessons. Those who willingly engage in hafiz practice manage both aspects in a balanced manner. Nonetheless, there are instances of weakened school performance or interrupted memory lessons due to low motivation. Parents noted that students occasionally encounter difficulties during the final stages of memorization, necessitating tough choices. Similar challenges arise when preparing for the hafiz exam. Voluntary hafiz trainees, however, demonstrate success in both their school studies and memorization, with their skills continually improving.

**Actions for the Protection of Memory**

Becoming a hafiz necessitates substantial effort, but maintaining that status demands even greater perseverance. A hadith of the Prophet emphasizes the need to preserve the Quranic memorization: "Take care to preserve this Qur'an in your memory. I swear by Allah, who holds the life of Muhammad in His hand, that the Qur'an escapes from memory faster than a tethered camel escapes from its rope." (8).

While hafiz training is crucial, safeguarding and sustaining memorization after achieving hafiz status is of paramount importance (8). To this end, students who complete their memorization can maintain their skills by engaging in daily recitation, incorporating memorized portions into their prayers, delivering lessons, reciting during Ramadan, leading Tarawih prayers, and comprehending the meanings of the verses they've memorized. In the Netherlands' hafiz program, the following strategies are implemented to aid students in maintaining their memorization:
Efforts are also undertaken to involve students who have completed their memorization by assigning them roles as assistant teachers in memory studies. Furthermore, these students are tasked with teaching Quran and religious education programs held on weekends, based on the education they have received in subsequent years. Through these measures, students continue to uphold their memorization while pursuing their secondary and even university education. Those who enroll in the religious teaching department at secondary education institutions have the opportunity to reinforce their memorization during their academic journey.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY**

**Effects of Hafiz on Social Life of Students and Parents**

Hafiz training has yielded numerous positive impacts on Muslim families. Over time, families with weak ties to religious non-governmental organizations have experienced a transformation in their relationship with mosques and their broader social environment. Families that may have previously been less meticulous about religious practices tend to become more attuned to religious aspects once their children become hafiz. These instances serve as positive reflections of hafiz education within families. However, cases in which parents are not well-informed about memorization can negatively affect students. Hence, it's crucial that parents are properly educated about the process. Insufficient information can lead to undue pressure on students, potentially harming their psychological well-being. While conducting hafiz training, providing examples of balanced social planning for both students and parents, along with guidance in this area, is essential.

Interviews have revealed instances where parental issues have had adverse effects on students' performance. One student, who was excelling in class, saw a decline in his performance after his friend's parents went through a divorce, causing family conflict. This situation left the student anxious and fearful, affecting his motivation for memorization. Similarly, another student exhibited introverted behavior and academic difficulties due to parental restrictions on phone usage. The student felt excessively controlled, leading to a negative reaction. These examples underscore the significance of parents' influence on their children's attitudes and behaviors in the context of hafiz training.

**The Role of Parents in Hafiz Education**

Parents play a pivotal role in the education and upbringing of their children. This process starts before marriage and continues through adulthood. Insights from interviews with parents of hafiz students shed light on the considerable efforts parents invest. Out of 286 hafiz students, interviews with 35 parents revealed the extent to which parents contribute to the hafiz journey. Sharing a few examples helps illuminate the challenges of this process.

"I have two kids. Allah blessed us with our elder daughter becoming a hafiz. I desire the same for my second daughter. Our eldest, Fatma Nur, voluntarily
embarked on the hafiz path at the age of nine. With our daughter's determination and the teachers' dedication, she completed her memorization journey. Throughout, we treated her like a hafiz, dedicating our days and nights to her cause. This meant isolation from social life, which at times was tough. There were moments when our daughter was reluctant to attend classes, but we motivated her to persevere. Currently aged 16, her memorization coincided with puberty, bringing its own challenges. Hafiz had a positive impact on her school performance, as teachers noticed her remarkable progress. While preparing for her final exam, the COVID-19 pandemic posed obstacles. She aspires to become a psychologist and pedagogue, a journey spanning four years. Over this period, we couldn't entertain guests, watch TV, or take a break. My daughter's dedication inspired us; we fell in love with this path. Society highly values memorization, and though skeptics initially doubted her capabilities, her progress silenced them. Our daughter is now well-respected. Religious ceremonies and hospitality take precedence, demonstrating the considerable journey we've traversed. This path was challenging, but we overcame it. One memory that remains is a turning point. Our daughter reached the tenth page when her teacher wanted to speak with me. He suggested giving up due to her struggles, fearing she might grow distant from religion. However, my daughter refused to quit, even though this decision affected her health. When she resumed, her happiness returned, and she improved. The final days of memorization were especially tough; it was time to let go. With determination, she faced this challenge. My daughter's hafiz status earns her immense respect, allowing her to participate in hafiz programs. The arduous but valuable journey of hafiz training is evident in our country. Unlike Islamic countries where boarding schools complete memorization, our journey in the Netherlands enabled us to experience every step together with our child. Our educators played a substantial role, becoming like family. We could contact them anytime; their dedication was admirable. They formed close bonds with the students, sharing their joys and sorrows. Teachers were pivotal to this journey's success, continuously motivating us and our children. During moments of exhaustion or desire to quit, teachers stepped in, rekindling our hope. 'The beginning of knowledge is bitter like an onion, but the end is sweeter than honey.' This quote served as a consistent motivator. Our teachers reiterated these words.

"We are parents of three children; the youngest is a hafiz. He embarked on memorization at age 10 and completed it at age 13. This journey was voluntary, driven by encouragement from his friends. Upon his decision, we advised him that it wouldn't be easy and required determination. Our child commenced with resolve, commuting 35 km daily to attend the hafiz training. This continued for three years. Specific conditions were set, such as no travel to Turkey or elsewhere. For two years, we couldn't go on vacation or entertain guests at home. When relatives went on vacation, we requested they not share photos, as our daughter, a hafiz, felt saddened
by her inability to join them. Some constraints were challenging. During summer, while peers played, he worked. We studied alongside him for hours at the same table. Our daughter often slept during the 35-kilometer commute. This journey was far from easy, yet it didn't negatively impact his school performance. His classes are going well now. He aspires to become a pedagogue. When our child is introduced in public as a hafiz, people express wonder and admiration. 'How did he manage to memorize while attending school?' they ask. It's a common question.

“I am the father of three children. We were delighted when our youngest child became a hafiz. Our neighbor's daughter played a pivotal role in initiating our child's memorization journey. He expressed interest, and we wholeheartedly supported and encouraged him. This training wasn't a burden for him because it was his own aspiration. The teachers were immensely supportive as well. Throughout this process, we learned to organize our lives meticulously. We maintained consistent monitoring of our child's progress, always offering unwavering support. We shielded him from the challenges, ensuring he didn't feel the difficulties. Family unity and cohesion were crucial for our child's success. We made sure he didn't sense our own challenges. However, there were instances when the rigorous memorization practice affected his academic performance, leading to even a class failure. Intensified memorization lessons sometimes took precedence, causing him to occasionally prioritize them over schoolwork. To address this, we had discussions with the school principal. Now, our daughter is completing her school program at an accelerated pace. She actively participates in the memory program here as well. Our child garners respect in society for being a hafiz, evident in people's interactions. I believe that success in this endeavor is attributed to a combination of factors—25% to us as parents, 25% to the teachers, but the lion's share, 50%, belongs to the students themselves. The positive rapport between educators and students in hafiz education significantly contributes to the successful execution of this educational journey. When teachers demonstrate special care and entrust responsibilities, students feel valued and their dedication flourishes.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN MEMORY EDUCATION

To comprehensively address the issues encountered in the practice of memory education, it's essential to categorize them under various subheadings (Çaylı, 2005). These problems stem from educators, parents, and students, each demanding specific attention.

Challenges Arising from Instructors:

Instructors must maintain high morale among students, consistently exhibit exceptional performance, and provide continuous motivation. Becoming a hafiz is not achievable for every student, as it requires a certain level of intelligence. Additionally, instructors should be subject matter experts and themselves be hafizes (Salihoğlu, 2010, pp. 78). Inexperienced or underqualified trainers may prove
inadequate in this regard. Given that students attend classes only four days a week, efficient time management is crucial. Not all educators can adapt to this compressed schedule. It has been observed that some families engage in unhealthy competition, comparing their children with one another, which can escalate into conflicts. Instructors should proactively identify and deter such situations. Comparing children across families is a significant issue that educators should address by providing guidance to families. Balancing the memory program with regular school lessons is critical for students, as they are simultaneously enrolled in both. Educators need to tirelessly emphasize the importance of this balance. Additionally, trainers often adjust their vacations based on students' progress, making it challenging to have consistent annual holidays. This practice, while demanding, is commendable.

**Issues Stemming from Parents:**

Some parents perceive that their responsibilities end once their child becomes a hafiz, misunderstanding the broader significance of memorization. Non-compliance with the course schedule is a notable concern; some parents attempt to take extended leaves for various reasons. Such leaves hinder students' ability to maintain memorization momentum, resulting in difficulties when they return. Some parents mistakenly believe that their child's entire life revolves around memorization, inadvertently overshadowing regular school education. Instances were observed where mothers or fathers displayed varying degrees of interest in hafiz practice, sometimes leading to indifference within the family. A few parents subscribe to the notion that enrolling their child in the course fulfills their duty, neglecting continued involvement. For instance, some mothers become overly absorbed in their child's memory journey, treating it like an indispensable aspect of their life. Conversely, fathers often adopt a more moderate approach. This divide can engender conflicts within families. The headmistress of the course often encounters such situations. A comprehensive education for families before embarking on hafiz training could mitigate these issues.

**Challenges Faced by Students:**

Primarily, it's important to note that, based on interviews with hafiz educators, memorization generally has a positive effect on students' overall school performance. Nonetheless, memory students can feel disadvantaged due to missing out on age-appropriate activities and games enjoyed by their peers. This discrepancy can negatively impact their motivation (32). Time management is another challenge, with some students effectively managing their time to complete daily lessons while others struggle. Those who struggle often face time-planning difficulties. Negative suggestions from relatives, such as aunts, uncles, and others, can significantly impact students' motivation. These relatives often express concerns like, "You're too young; can you really study this much at your age? You should be playing and having fun." Such comments undermine motivation and can even lead to abandonment of the
memory pursuit. Students' inadequate sleep and reduced attentiveness at school have been attributed to their hafiz status. This issue has prompted school authorities to inquire and link it to their memorization commitments, leading to interventions from municipal authorities in response to complaints from schools.

**Challenges Arising from Management and Course Physical Environment:**

Hafiz students are children who also deserve time for play and leisure. Unfortunately, the current memory education facilities lack spaces where children can relax, engage in sports activities, and enjoy technological and recreational activities. Often, memory sessions are conducted in shared spaces near administrative departments and places of congregation. The absence of dedicated spaces for relaxation, recreation, and green areas can create problems for students, impacting their overall experience.

**CONCLUSION**

Muslim communities in the Netherlands have become an integral part of the nation's fabric. Recently, there has been an increasing demand for individuals with local education, language proficiency, and cultural understanding to engage in religious services within the Dutch state. The hafiz studies in the Netherlands should be seen as a crucial step in cultivating individuals who will go on to serve as imams and fulfill other religious roles.

Hafiz education holds immense value but is undoubtedly accompanied by significant challenges. It's a formidable task to guide young children, amidst their playful years, through the intense process of memorizing six hundred pages of religious texts. Success in this endeavor requires the combined dedication of educators, students, and parents, all making considerable sacrifices.

The commencement of hafiz training in the Netherlands traces back to 2007, following thorough evaluation and consultation. Positive feedback from parents during these initial meetings led to the formulation of a comprehensive plan. The training began at the Amsterdam Selimiye Mosque. Friends, teachers, and family members are instrumental in encouraging children to embark on the memorization journey. While pursuing hafiz training, students continue their regular school education. This structured and disciplined approach, despite demanding great personal dedication, serves as a pioneering effort in Europe. The ultimate objective of hafiz training is to seek Allah's favor, attain the spiritual rewards promised through Quranic memorization, and embrace one of the noblest pathways to knowledge. Interestingly, none of the respondents stated that they pursued hafiz education for societal acceptance, vanity, or professional gain. The Federation emphasizes that the primary goal of this initiative is to meet the need for competent instructors who can deliver high-quality education in hafiz courses and teach Quranic studies during basic religious education programs over weekends.
The hafiz training program encompasses preparatory stages, memorization examination, and the commencement of formal hafiz training. Proper parental education is vital at the preparatory phase, conveying the arduous and prolonged nature of the journey. This proactive approach has proven effective in clarifying students' educational goals for the upcoming years. In response to inquiries regarding their children's future professions, parents frequently mentioned aspirations for careers such as psychologists, pedagogues, lawyers, architects, and teachers. Interestingly, students also express their desire to serve as educators within hafiz courses while pursuing these professions.

In interviews, parents affirmed that their children's choice to pursue hafiz education was voluntary. However, despite their willingness, the process proved challenging, leading to occasional stress over lesson preparation and delivery, particularly during exam periods at school. Parents identified exam preparation as a particularly demanding period. They acknowledged the educators' crucial role, emphasizing the educators' dedication and support, treating students as their own and addressing various concerns. Educators reciprocally stressed the substantial support they received from parents and recognized that their success would be unattainable without this partnership.

It's imperative to recognize that hafiz education encompasses not only memorization but also requires a nuanced understanding of children's psychological development and sociological integration. Balancing the educational journey with regular school lessons is vital, as placing undue emphasis solely on memorization can lead to strain, fractures, and even significant stress. Hence, supplementary courses to aid students' school studies are often incorporated.

The passion educators exhibit for their roles, their attentive approach to student concerns, their commitment to aiding lesson preparation, and their consistent moral support are pivotal in shaping the hafiz training experience.

It has been seen that the places where the memory is held are not suitable for the students to play games and provide spiritual and physical relaxation and they are deprived of the green field environment.

Based on the data obtained as a result of the research, it will be useful to make the following suggestions to all parties involved in hafiz education.

Before commencing hafiz training, it is crucial to provide parents with a comprehensive training program spanning a specific timeframe. This program should encompass various aspects, including the appropriate approach towards their children, guidelines for maintaining a balanced social life, and strategies to prevent behaviors that might disrupt the education process.

During the pre-preparatory phase of hafiz students, the focus should extend beyond mere memorization. Awareness should be cultivated regarding the profound significance of hafiz, its position in Islamic society, associated responsibilities, and the broader goal of comprehending and conveying the teachings of the Qur'an.
Considering that children are in a playful developmental stage, educators should meticulously plan activities that allow for recreational games and offer opportunities for spiritual and physical rejuvenation. Striking a healthy balance between the course and leisure is essential, rather than exclusively concentrating on the curriculum.

The physical environment where hafiz education takes place must be thoughtfully designed to accommodate both recreational and relaxation needs. To address the requirement for green spaces, collaboration with neighboring institutions or municipal facilities can be explored.

Guidance should be provided to steer students towards professions that facilitate the preservation of their memorization skills in the long run, thus merging their hafiz status with their future careers.

Given that hafiz education runs parallel to regular school lessons, it is imperative to establish harmony between the two. A delicate equilibrium should be achieved, enabling students to pursue both memorization and academic education without detriment to either.

Psychological and social aspects of students' lives should be given due consideration. Continuous and active guidance initiatives should be implemented, and educators should remain well-informed and attuned to these aspects through regular annual in-service training programs.

Recognizing that students are managing both hafiz training and school studies, they should be assisted in effective time management. Providing support and guidance in this crucial skill will contribute to their success in both spheres.

INTERVIEWED PARENTS
IP1: Tayyibe Akgün, 38, Karaman, University, Pedagogue
IP2: Hüseyin Akgül, 47, Netherlands, Vocational High School, Auto Mechanic
IP3: Ramazan Dağ, 55, Aksaray, Secondary School, Health Worker

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