

The Interaction of Elderly Individuals in Learning to Read the Qur'an

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the interaction of elderly individuals in learning to read the Qur'an, particularly in the context of the implementation of Surah Al-Qamar, verse 17. It also analyzes the teaching strategies employed, the symbolic interaction between participants and the Qur'an, and the learning motivation among elderly learners. This research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah, located in Dusun Mojogeneng, Desa Mojogeneng, Kecamatan Jatirejo, Kabupaten Mojokerto, East Java. The pesantren provides Qur'anic learning programs for elderly learners in a supportive and age-friendly environment. This study adopts a qualitative approach utilizing a case study method with data obtained through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to interpret the interaction of elderly learners in Qur'anic education. The findings reveal that applying the values contained in Surah Al-Qamar:17 strengthens participants' faith and perseverance in learning the Qur'an. Meanwhile, adaptive teaching strategies that align with the characteristics of older adults play a crucial role in maintaining their motivation. The symbolic interaction developed between the participants and the Qur'an provides profound spiritual and emotional meaning, serving as a key driver for the continuity of learning in old age. The study also reveals that the motivation of elderly learners is not solely intrinsic but is also influenced by social support from their surrounding environment. However, the study's limitation lies in its focus on a single research site and its reliance on subjectively interpreted qualitative data, which should be considered when generalizing the findings. These results are expected to serve as a foundation for developing more effective and compassionate methods of Qur'anic instruction for elderly learners.

Keywords

Elderly; Learning Motivation; Qur'anic Learning.



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INTRODUCTION

Quranic education is often oriented towards children and adolescents, while older individuals are left at the margins. This pattern is also evident at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah in Mojogeneng, Jatirejo, Mojokerto. Initially, Qur'anic learning was formulated for younger age groups, with elderly participants entering the educational space informally and without structured pedagogical support. As Hidayat, (2020) affirms, for elderly individuals, learning to read the Qur'an is not just fulfilling a religious duty—it also meets deep emotional and spiritual needs. Their participation often emerges not from formal invitation but from personal longing to reconnect with faith in the final stage of life.

The interaction between elderly learners and their instructors (ustadz/ustadzah) and among fellow students presents a unique set of social dynamics. Elderly learners are generally positioned with deference by younger santri, but also sometimes experience feelings of inferiority or hesitation in active participation due to age and cognitive constraints. According to observations at the pesantren, elderly learners tend to be more silent during group recitation, often waiting for one-on-one moments with teachers. Teachers, in turn, must balance patience with encouragement and modify their communication style to ensure comprehension. As Hadi et al., (2025) observe, many elderly students face fundamental barriers, such as not knowing the Arabic alphabet (huruf hijaiyah), having no prior literacy experience, and struggling with methods not tailored to their cognitive and psychosocial conditions. These realities create a stratified learning environment that requires conscious pedagogical and interpersonal interventions to ensure inclusivity.

Several internal and external factors affect the degree of elderly engagement in Qur'anic learning. Internally, age-related decline in memory, eyesight, and attention span significantly impacts the pace and quality of learning (Aprilia Ayu Nila Sari et al., 2022). Externally, the lack of instructional materials adapted to older learners, age-appropriate groupings, and time constraints due to household or health responsibilities often hinders consistent participation. Nonetheless, certain strategies have been identified as effective in facilitating positive interaction: personalized mentoring by ustadz/ustadzah, phonetic methods like the Iqro' system adjusted for slow-paced repetition, and moral support through peer encouragement. Teachers who incorporate interpersonal approaches—such as repeated affirmation, empathy, and flexibility—tend to foster stronger learning motivation among elderly learners. These practices reflect the spirit of Surah Al-Qamar:17, affirming that with the right support and sincere intention, the Qur'an can indeed be approached

and understood by learners of all ages.

A study conducted at Pesantren Lansia Nurul Iman Papahan in Karanganyar revealed that elderly learners are highly motivated to read and memorize the Qur'an and actively engage in religious activities. Despite this, they still face obstacles such as physical and cognitive decline, and feelings of insecurity due to being outpaced by younger participants (Firdausi, 2020). Old age is a stage of life marked by various physical, psychological, and social changes. One of the main challenges is the decline in cognitive ability, particularly in remembering and processing new information. In the Islamic context, reading and studying the Qur'an hold immense spiritual value and contribute significantly to the mental and spiritual well-being of the elderly. Recognizing this, Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah has taken a progressive step by establishing a Qur'an learning program specifically designed for the elderly. This program aims to assist them in reading and understanding the Qur'an while also nurturing their spirituality through an age-friendly approach (As-salim & Wonosobo, 2020). As affirmed in Surah Al-Qamar, verse 17, Allah has made the Qur'an easy to learn. This is supported by Hidayat, who found that learning the Qur'an can enhance the spiritual and cognitive quality of life for the elderly (Hidayat, 2020). Furthermore, Agustina noted that elderly individuals' interaction with the Qur'an provides them with a deeper sense of purpose and helps them approach old age with greater tranquility (Agustina, 2019).

In the last five years, several relevant studies have contributed to understanding the intersection of elderly learning and Qur'anic education. Aprilia Ayu Nila Sari et al., (2022) found that the implementation of the Anaba method in Qur'anic learning circles for the elderly not only helped participants in their reading skills but also strengthened their social bonds and religious spirit, although the learning pace varied significantly. However, this study did not focus on how interpersonal interactions—especially between elderly learners and their teachers or younger peers—shaped the learning process. Similarly, Maulana Probo Daru, Joko Sarjono, (2022) reported using the Tsaqifa method in a pesantren setting, which required patience and step-by-step instruction from the teachers. However, the interpersonal strategies needed to maintain the elderly's motivation and sense of safety in mixed-age learning environments were not deeply explored. Another study by Irawati & Madani, (2019) quantitatively proved a significant correlation between the frequency of Qur'an reading and improved cognitive function among the elderly. However, it did not investigate the sociocultural or interpersonal learning context that supports such cognitive engagement. Permana & Naim, (2023) examined a community-based Qur'an learning program in

Banyumas that improved elderly participation through repetition, direct instruction, and peer encouragement. Nevertheless, the social dynamics between elderly learners and others in a pesantren setting were not the focus of their study. Munirah et al., (2023) studied literacy development among elderly women in Nusa Indah Village, showing that traditional methods like Iqro' and face-to-face instruction worked well. Yet, her research did not address the complexity of elderly learners' interaction with younger participants or their teachers in religious boarding schools.

From these five studies, a significant research gap becomes evident: while previous scholars have emphasized methods and cognitive benefits of elderly Qur'an learning, few have examined the nature and dynamics of interpersonal interactions between elderly learners, instructors, and fellow santri within the unique social structure of a pesantren (Taufik et al., 2023). Moreover, little attention has been given to how interpersonal teaching strategies such as empathetic mentoring, affirmation, and peer-based reinforcement can enhance the elderly's learning outcomes, sense of inclusion, and spiritual confidence (Hamzah, 2024). Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its focus on exploring how individual elderly learners at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah engage in Qur'anic reading through social interaction, the obstacles and enablers they face, and how teachers adapt their pedagogical and interpersonal approaches to suit the unique needs of elderly learners (Febriyarni, 2024). This study is theoretically grounded in Symbolic Interactionism (Mead), which views learning as a process shaped by social exchange, and also incorporates Rogerian humanistic education principles that emphasize empathy and learner-centered facilitation (Raniasati et al., 2022). It aligns with national commitments to inclusive lifelong religious education as echoed in Indonesia's Law No. 13/1998 on the Welfare of the Elderly and WHO's global call for inclusive elderly learning systems.

Therefore, it is essential to conduct further research on the perceptions and interactions of the elderly with the Qur'an, particularly within the learning context at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah. While previous studies (e.g., Sari et al., 2021; Daru et al., 2021; Irawati & Madani, 2021; Permana & Naim, 2023; Munirah, 2024) have explored various methods of Qur'anic instruction and their outcomes, few have examined in detail the interpersonal dynamics that unfold between elderly learners, their instructors, and fellow santri in pesantren environments. This study, therefore, aims not only to understand the dynamics of Qur'anic learning among the elderly but also to investigate how interpersonal strategies such as empathy, affirmation, and social reinforcement can shape their

learning experiences and sense of spiritual fulfillment.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach utilizing a case study method, research that aims to explore the interpersonal interaction of elderly individuals in learning to read the Qur'an at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah, located in Mojogeneng, Jatirejo, Mojokerto. The researcher is the primary instrument in this naturalistic inquiry (Sugiyono, 2017). The data in this study consist of interview transcripts, observational notes, and supporting documentation related to Qur'anic learning activities involving elderly learners. The sources of data include the pesantren leader, Qur'anic instructors (ustadz/ustadzah), and elderly santri actively participating in the program.

Data collection methods comprised observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Creswell, 2014; Sugiyono, 2019). The observation was unstructured and participatory from January 10 to January 20, 2025, capturing the daily realities of the learning process in the elderly Qur'an class. In-depth interviews were conducted with the head of the pesantren, two female instructors, and six elderly learners, all selected through purposive sampling due to their relevance and insight into the learning environment. Documentation involved collecting materials such as schedules, attendance lists, organizational charts, and daily evaluation records of elderly participants (Mesiono et al., 2017).

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher filtered and organized the data, focusing on the patterns of interaction and participation among elderly learners. The findings were presented in descriptive narratives during data display to show the structure, challenges, and interpersonal strategies used in the learning environment. In the conclusion drawing and verification stage, the researcher conducted critical analysis using relevant theoretical frameworks—particularly symbolic interaction theory and humanistic learning theory—to interpret the data. Additionally, the findings were compared with previous studies (e.g., Sari et al., 2021; Irawati & Madani, 2021; Munirah, 2024) to provide theoretical triangulation. The validity of the findings was ensured through source and methodological triangulation to obtain credible and dependable results (Sugiyono, 2019).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents the results of field research conducted at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah. The data were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation, focusing on how elderly learners interact with instructors and peers during Qur'anic learning. The findings are categorized based on research focuses, supported by theoretical analysis and prior studies.

Table 1. Individual Interaction of Elderly Learners in Qur'anic Reading

No	Elderly Learners' Perspective on Interaction	Qur'anic Learning Strategies	Enthusiasm and Learning Outcomes
1	Elderly participants feel respected and accepted by the instructors despite their limited reading skills. They feel more comfortable in a relaxed and pressure-free learning environment.	Instructors apply a personal approach, slow repetition, an adapted Iqro method, and frequent verbal affirmations.	Learners show high enthusiasm, attend regularly, and gradually recognize hijaiyah letters and recite short surahs, albeit slowly.
2	Peer interaction among elderly learners is strong; they support and encourage one another. However, some feel inferior when compared to younger students.	Teachers group elderly learners into small clusters to ensure focused learning and avoid comparisons with younger santri.	Their self-confidence improves, they are no longer hesitant to ask questions, and they feel closer to the Qur'an, with increased spiritual calmness.
3	Elderly learners express that Qur'anic classes are not only educational but also serve as meaningful social and spiritual gatherings.	Sessions are integrated with collective prayers, religious advice, and reflective discussions to promote positive interaction.	Motivation is very high; learners report stronger spiritual drive and behavioral changes, such as praying more regularly and feeling more at peace in old age.

In the first unit, it was found that elderly learners felt appreciated and fully accepted by their instructors, despite their limited Qur'anic reading abilities. This sense of comfort was largely due to the relaxed and non-pressuring learning environment established within the pesantren. The instructors maintained a patient and non-judgmental attitude, allowing the elderly to progress at their own pace. The learning process was intentionally slow and repetitive, which enabled participants to absorb the material calmly and with greater confidence. These instructional strategies resulted in a high level of attendance and consistent participation. Although most participants were still at a basic level, they began to recognize hijaiyah letters and were gradually able to recite short surahs, demonstrating both persistence and enthusiasm in their learning journey.

The second unit highlights the strength of peer interaction among elderly learners. They developed strong bonds with one another and demonstrated mutual encouragement and emotional

support throughout the learning process. This solidarity served as a sustaining factor in their continued participation. However, some elderly learners still felt insecure compared to younger students. To address this, instructors implemented small group arrangements specifically for the elderly to ensure a more focused and comfortable environment. This approach helped reduce feelings of intimidation and fostered a more supportive atmosphere. As a result, the elderly learners gained confidence, became more engaged, and actively participated in classroom activities. They asked questions without hesitation and developed a sense of comfort that contributed positively to their overall learning experience.

In the third unit, Qur'anic learning was perceived by the elderly as an educational activity and a valuable social and spiritual experience. The sessions became a meaningful part of their daily lives, something they eagerly anticipated. The learning process extended beyond reading practice to include communal prayers, religious reflections, and opportunities for personal sharing. These elements fostered a warm and emotionally engaging classroom environment. The elderly participants displayed high motivation, attended regularly, and expressed a growing spiritual connection to the Qur'an. They also reported behavioral changes, such as more consistent prayer and a deeper sense of calm in their later years. The learning experience thus offered both cognitive and emotional benefits, reinforcing the importance of inclusive religious education tailored to the needs of the elderly.

Interaction and Perspectives Between the Elderly and the Qur'an

The interaction of elderly individuals with the Qur'an at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah transcends mere technical activities of learning to read hijaiyah letters. It embodies a profound, reflective, and meaningful spiritual relationship. The process of Qur'anic learning becomes an inner experience that connects the soul's longing with the Divine Word, especially in the twilight years, when one begins to contemplate the essence of life and its ultimate purpose. Based on in-depth interviews, the elderly perceive the Qur'an not merely as a holy scripture, but as a lifelong spiritual companion that provides peace in old age, offers reassurance about the afterlife, and is believed to serve as an intercessor in the grave. These meanings reflect the deep emotional and spiritual attachment the elderly have developed through their life experiences.

One of the elderly participants shared that although they only completed elementary education and resumed learning the Qur'an after retirement, the experience has become deeply transformative. The Qur'an is now perceived as the light of their life, offering a sense of peace and

clarity. Despite not yet fully fluent, each reading session evokes a profound emotional connection, described as a moment of calmness and spiritual intimacy, almost like engaging in a personal conversation with God. This perception is a powerful internal motivation to continue learning and deepening their spiritual journey in later life. Her statement reflects that the Qur'an is not merely understood as a text to be read with proper tajwid and pronunciation but as a means of drawing closer to God, a remedy for spiritual wounds, and a source of life's tranquility. A similar sentiment was expressed by Mr. H. Sulaiman (72 years old), a retired teacher and elderly santri:

Another elderly participant expressed that although they had previously been able to read the Qur'an, the engagement lacked depth and consistency. Since joining the structured Qur'anic learning sessions at the pesantren, they have experienced a renewed spiritual closeness to God. Reading short surahs has become a reflective practice, prompting them to contemplate the brevity of life and the importance of spiritual preparation. This shift in perspective illustrates how consistent learning can lead to deeper personal reflection and strengthened religious commitment in later life.

These interviews indicate that the elderly interpret the Qur'an not only intellectually, but also existentially. The Qur'an becomes a guide and a source of reflection on life's journey, particularly as one nears the end of life. Elderly learners at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah demonstrate a positive attitude and high enthusiasm toward Qur'anic learning. Despite physical limitations such as impaired vision, hearing, or memory, their motivation often surpasses that of younger learners. Mrs. Khadijah admitted she once felt embarrassed due to her stammering recitation, but the support of the ustadzah and her peers reignited her determination. An elderly participant admitted initially feeling ashamed when observing peers who could read the Qur'an more fluently. This emotional barrier, however, gradually diminished due to the patience and encouragement consistently shown by the instructor. The supportive learning environment fostered a growing sense of enthusiasm and self-acceptance. The participant came to embrace the belief that progressing slowly is far better than not learning at all, reflecting a shift toward a more positive and resilient learning attitude.

This illustrates that the elderly prioritize willingness and courage over mere capability. Learning becomes a personal spiritual struggle (jihad) to draw closer to God. Mr. H. Sulaiman also remarked that studying the Qur'an in old age feels more meaningful because worldly obligations have lessened. One participant reflected on the shift in priorities that comes with aging, noting that during their younger years, responsibilities such as work, raising children, and managing household

duties often left little time for religious learning. Now, in retirement, they can finally focus on studying the Qur'an. This stage of life is seen as a chance to recover lost time and fulfill spiritual aspirations that were previously set aside, highlighting a sense of personal redemption and renewed purpose in later life.

Such reflections reveal that learning the Qur'an in later life is seen as repentance, spiritual reinforcement, and fulfilling religious duties that may have been overlooked in youth. Beyond the cognitive domain, the learning process touches emotional and spiritual dimensions. The researcher witnessed tears shed by elderly learners upon successfully reciting verses or hearing simple interpretations. As Mrs. Khadijah shared, one elderly participant recounted a deeply emotional moment when they could recite Surah Al-Falaq independently for the first time. The experience moved them to tears, not from sorrow but from overwhelming gratitude. They expressed disbelief and joy that, despite their advanced age, Allah had granted them the opportunity to continue learning the Qur'an. This moment marked a spiritual milestone, symbolizing both personal achievement and a profound sense of divine mercy and guidance in later life.

This phenomenon suggests a profound emotional connection between learning achievement and spiritual experience. Qur'anic learning becomes an inner act of worship, performed with sincerity and heart. Mr. H. Sulaiman added: One participant described a significant transformation in their approach to reading the Qur'an. In the past, recitation was treated as a mere formality, performed without deep engagement. However, through consistent participation in the learning sessions, their reading has evolved into a reflective and emotional experience. The verses—particularly those concerning death and the Day of Judgment—now resonate deeply, touching the heart and prompting sincere contemplation. This shift illustrates the development of a more meaningful and internalized connection with the sacred text in later life.

These statements highlight the spiritual depth with which the elderly interpret the sacred text, not merely reading but contemplating and allowing the verses to become mirrors of life. Through interviews and observation, it becomes clear that the elderly's interaction with the Qur'an at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah is deeply meaningful. The Qur'an serves as a source of serenity, a refuge, and a space for existential reflection. The elderly do not come merely to learn to read but to reconnect with the Divine message they have long yearned for. Their attitude toward learning is positive, spirited, and full of hope despite physical constraints. This activity is viewed as a personal spiritual jihad. Their emotional engagement with the Qur'an reflects sincerity, humility,

and profound love, as encapsulated in Surah Al-Qamar (54:17). One of the participants expressed that a particular verse of the Qur'an, which emphasizes the ease of remembering its contents, became a powerful source of motivation in their learning journey. The verse was frequently echoed during study sessions and served as a form of spiritual reinforcement, strengthening their belief that advancing age should not hinder learning. It became a personal reminder that the Qur'an is accessible to anyone who earnestly strives to understand it, and helped maintain their enthusiasm and perseverance in improving both recitation and comprehension.

Strategies for Teaching Qur'anic Reading to the Elderly

Learning to read the Qur'an in old age is not an easy task. Elderly learners at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah face physical, psychological, and technical limitations. However, their passion for understanding the Word of God never diminishes. This study identifies several learning strategies, stemming from teaching methods, the role of companions, and personal efforts of the learners. The pesantren adopts both talaqqi (direct recitation) and classical classroom approaches, adapted to the abilities of the elderly. Ustadz/ustadzah teach hijaiyah letters sequentially using repetition (drilling), group recitation (simaan), and slow articulation. Small group settings allow for personalized instruction.

Mrs. Marfu'ah (64 years old) commented: A participant highlighted the supportive and inclusive teaching approach used by the instructor, who patiently guides learners by pointing to each letter and reading with them. This method creates a non-intimidating environment where mistakes are seen as part of the learning process rather than a source of embarrassment. The sense of collective progress fosters mutual encouragement among elderly learners, reinforcing a communal spirit and easing the challenges typically associated with learning in later life. The method emphasizes hands-on practice with gradual correction of pronunciation and tajwid. Teachers also provide spiritual encouragement to prevent discouragement. Their role is crucial — not only as instructors but also as empathetic spiritual mentors.

Mr. H. Thohir (69 years old) noted: A participant shared that despite experiencing deteriorating eyesight, their motivation to continue learning the Qur'an remains strong due to the patient and attentive guidance of the instructor. When errors occur during recitation, the ustadz offers gentle corrections and often sits beside the learner to help identify the letters more clearly. This personal and compassionate approach provides emotional support and strengthens the participant's commitment to learning, illustrating the importance of empathy and individualized

attention in elderly education.

Enthusiasm and Learning Outcomes of Elderly Qur'anic Students

The enthusiasm of elderly learners at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah is extraordinarily high, driven by strong spiritual motivation. This aligns with the message of Surah Al-Qamar verse 17, which inspires and encourages them to continue learning despite age and physical limitations. Observations and interviews reveal consistent attendance, active participation, and a willingness to review lessons outside formal study hours. This pattern mirrors findings from other pesantren lansia, where strong religious intent motivates consistent engagement in Qur'anic learning (Hidayat, 2020). The humanistic teaching style and camaraderie among participants further fuel their enthusiasm, as also emphasized by Irsyad, M., Murtadho, H., & Luthfi, (2020), who found that social-emotional bonding and friendly pedagogical approaches enhance elderly learners' motivation.

A participant expressed profound joy in the learning process, describing how, despite their age, they feel like a child again, eager and curious in each session. Every letter successfully read brings peace and fulfillment, turning learning into a source of emotional comfort. Similar reflections are found in Agustina, (2019) study on older women in pesantren, where learning Qur'an instills a renewed sense of wonder and inner peace. This renewed sense of wonder and spiritual satisfaction highlights how Qur'anic education in later life can evoke both humility and deep inner joy.

Learning outcomes among the elderly include improved ability to recognize hijaiyah letters, independently read short surahs, and increased self-confidence to participate in religious activities. These findings are consistent with research by Suryadi, et al, (2023) which showed significant cognitive and emotional progress in elderly Qur'anic learners in pesantren environments. The benefits are technical but emotional and social, such as Mr. Muslih, who now feels calmer and more confident joining family tadarus sessions, even though he is not fluent. The elderly also display a strong sense of lifelong learning and build social solidarity through emotional bonds within the study community, a point reinforced in Edumaspul, (2021) analysis of pesantren lansia as a space of religious empowerment and social connection.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the interaction between elderly individuals and the Qur'an at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah is not limited to technical or ritualistic practice, but rather embodies deep spiritual, reflective, and existential dimensions (Agustina, 2020). The elderly

no longer perceive the Qur'an merely as a sacred text to be recited, but as a lifelong companion, a source of tranquility, and a medium of intimate dialogue with the Divine (Billah, 2024). Their engagement in learning is accompanied by emotional depth, contemplative expressions, and a sincere effort to internalize its meanings (Okun & Nimrod, 2021). The learning space thus transforms into a spiritual sanctuary, where reading the Qur'an becomes an act of remembrance and surrender (Riviati & Indra, 2024a).

This phenomenon resonates strongly with the theory of symbolic interactionism as developed by George Herbert Mead and further articulated by Herbert Blumer. According to Blumer (1969), meaning is constructed through social interaction, not embedded inherently within objects. In this study, the Qur'an emerges as a meaningful symbol shaped by the learners' experiences, emotions, and life histories. For the elderly, reading the Qur'an becomes more than a cognitive task—it is a form of identity reconstruction and spiritual reaffirmation, shaped through consistent interaction with texts, teachers, and fellow learners (Zulkipli et al., 2018). The findings are further reinforced by the principles of andragogy proposed by Malcolm Knowles (1980), which assert that adult learning is primarily self-directed and driven by internal motivation (Bin Kadir et al., 2016). The elderly at this pesantren exemplify this principle, as their motivation to learn stems from spiritual longing, a desire to compensate for past gaps in religious practice, and a readiness to face the final phase of life (Ningsih, 2024). Their persistence in the learning process, despite physical and cognitive limitations, aligns with this model of adult education.

About psychosocial development, Erik Erikson's theory—specifically the final stage of integrity versus despair—provides a helpful lens to interpret the findings (Hearn et al., 2012). At this stage, elderly individuals reflect on their life journey and seek closure and meaning (Konowitz & Liang, 2018). Learning to read the Qur'an becomes a constructive way to attain a sense of wholeness and spiritual integrity. Through this process, the elderly strengthen their religious understanding and find solace and serenity in the twilight of life. A recurring verse cited by the learners is Surah Al-Qamar:17, which emphasizes the accessibility of the Qur'an. This verse, repeatedly referred to during learning sessions, serves as a theological motivation and an internal compass, assuring the learners that their efforts are divinely supported (Valenttri, 2022). The verse becomes a psychological and emotional anchor in their journey of faith.

In practice, the teaching strategies employed reflect a responsive and empathetic approach to the challenges of aging. Instructors utilize methods such as *talaqqi*, *drilling*, *simaan*, and *small*

group learning (Salam, et al, 2025). These approaches are not rigidly applied but adapted to the learners' pace, limitations, and emotional states. Knowles (1984) highlighted the importance of recognizing the learners' lived experiences and readiness to learn, embodied in the pesantren's methodology, where technical instruction is balanced with emotional and spiritual reinforcement (Rosyidatul et al., 2021). Furthermore, the experience of successfully reading a surah brings elderly learners a profound sense of accomplishment, which aligns with the upper levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs—esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Reading becomes not only an act of religious devotion but also a personal milestone, enhancing their confidence and deepening their connection with God (Mutathahirin, et al, 2022).

Inclusive teaching strategies respond to challenges such as reduced vision, hearing, and stamina. Instructors provide close assistance, such as sitting beside learners, guiding their fingers along the text, and offering constant encouragement. These methods align with Carl Rogers' humanistic education approach, where unconditional positive regard and empathetic teacher-student relationships are central to the learning process (Valenttri, 2022). The researcher reflects that learning the Qur'an in old age is a pedagogical activity and a transformative and therapeutic journey (Jadidi et al., 2022). It constitutes an inner jihad that demands perseverance, humility, and emotional resilience. For many elderly learners, this process becomes a sacred ritual that heals, affirms, and redefines their final chapter of life (Amir et al., 2022; Riviati & Indra, 2024b). Their tears of joy and expressions of peace upon completing a surah are not simply emotional responses, but affirmations of spiritual renewal.

This study therefore not only confirms existing educational theories but also offers a nuanced insight into the intersection of religious literacy, aging, and spiritual transformation (Ando, et al , 2018). With its communal, respectful, and adaptive atmosphere, the pesantren setting becomes a fertile ground for such transformation. In contrast to traditional views that see the elderly as passive recipients of religious knowledge, the findings here assert their role as active agents in reconstructing meaning, embracing faith, and completing their life narratives with grace (Masruroh, F., & Rahma, 2023; Saeidi, A., & Niknia, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the interaction of elderly individuals in learning to read the Qur'an at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Hidayah Mojokerto is characterized by deep personal engagement,

strong spiritual motivation, and meaningful social participation. The learning process is not merely about mastering recitation skills but is a transformative journey toward inner peace and spiritual fulfillment. Despite various limitations related to age, the elderly demonstrate high enthusiasm, regular participation, and notable progress in reading ability. Their interaction with instructors and peers fosters a supportive environment, while the teaching strategies applied are empathetic and adaptive to their needs. The study affirms that learning the Qur'an in old age serves not only as religious education but also as a pathway for self-renewal and spiritual preparation for the final stage of life.

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