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## Transforming Qur'anic Literacy among Inmates through a Semi-Pesantren Model in Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Bitung

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how a semi-pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) educational model shapes Qur'anic literacy among inmates at Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Bitung, Indonesia. While studies on prison religious education are growing, limited research explains how Qur'anic literacy is developed pedagogically in correctional settings and how it relates to rehabilitation in practice. Using qualitative field research with a descriptive-analytical approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, and then analyzed thematically. In this study, Qur'anic literacy refers to foundational competencies in recognizing *hija'iyah* letters, reading Qur'anic text, and participating in guided religious learning. The findings show that the semi-pesantren model combines *tafriq* and *taushil* methods for letter recognition and reading development with structured learning in *tahfiz*, *fiqh*, *'aqidah*, Islamic history, and basic Arabic. This integrated model supports the gradual development of Qur'anic reading and writing skills while also encouraging religious discipline, moral reflection, and constructive behavioral change within the prison environment. The article's theoretical contribution lies in proposing a context-based framework that links Qur'anic literacy formation to faith-based rehabilitation through an adaptive semi-pesantren model in correctional institutions.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy is commonly understood as a set of language-related competencies that include reading, writing, listening, speaking, and critical thinking. In contemporary educational discourse, literacy extends beyond technical proficiency. It is increasingly viewed as a cognitive and ethical capacity through which individuals interpret knowledge, internalize values, and apply understanding in social life. Literacy, therefore, functions not merely as a skill but as a foundation for shaping reasoning, attitudes, and behaviour (Maskur, 2019; Mujib, 2017).

Within the Islamic tradition, literacy is inseparable from religious epistemology. The Qur'an places literacy at the center of human development, as reflected in the first revelation (Qur'an 96:1-5), which commands reading (*iqra'*) as the initial step toward knowledge and moral awareness. This mandate laid the foundation for a culture of Qur'anic literacy that integrates reading, writing, memorization, and comprehension. Despite its centrality, Qur'anic literacy in many contexts remains limited to recitation, with insufficient emphasis on understanding and internalizing its meanings, particularly among socially marginalized groups (Arkoun & Hidayatullah, 1998; Hafiz, 2015; Nurcholis, 1997).

Historically, the tradition of Qur'anic literacy developed alongside the preservation and compilation of the Qur'an during the prophetic period and subsequent generations. This tradition fostered a rich intellectual heritage in which Islamic scholarship addressed matters of faith, law, ethics, and social order. Qur'anic literacy thus became a comprehensive framework for guiding individual conduct and collective life, balancing spiritual and worldly concerns (Ahmadi & Ibda, 2018; Hayat & Yusuf, 2010; Sudjana, 2000).

In recent years, Qur'anic literacy has attracted renewed attention through educational initiatives in schools, madrasahs, and community-based programs, including those that promote religious moderation and the contextual interpretation of the Qur'an. These efforts reflect growing awareness that Qur'anic literacy plays a vital role in moral education and character formation. Consequently, the development of effective Qur'anic literacy models has become increasingly relevant across diverse educational and social settings (Dhofier, 1982; Gunarsa, 2006; Sulthon & Khusnurdilo, 2003).

One of the most established institutions for cultivating Qur'anic literacy is the pesantren. Historically, pesantren education has produced prominent scholars whose intellectual authority was grounded in rigorous engagement with the Qur'an and Islamic sciences. The effectiveness of pesantren lies in its integrated pedagogical structure, which combines Qur'anic reading and writing, memorization, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology (*'aqidah*), Islamic history (*tārikh*), language, and religious arts within a disciplined moral environment. This model demonstrates that Qur'anic literacy is most effective when embedded within a structured system of religious learning and character development (Dessy Debrilianawati et al., 2013; Dhofier, 1982; Majid, 2019).

Adapting this tradition, a semi-pesantren model offers a flexible framework for applying pesantren-based education in non-traditional settings. Such a model

emphasizes foundational Qur'anic literacy skills—reading, writing, and comprehension—supported by instructional methods such as *tafriq* and *taushil*, alongside complementary subjects including *fiqh*, 'aqidah, Islamic history, and Arabic language. This approach is particularly relevant in correctional institutions, where education is increasingly recognized as a key component of rehabilitation (Astawa et al., 2020; Shihab, 2007).

Following the shift from a punitive incarceration system to a rehabilitative correctional framework in Indonesia, correctional institutions are expected to prioritize educational and spiritual development. In this context, Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Kelas II B Kota Bitung represents a relevant site for implementing a semi-pesantren-based Qur'anic literacy program. Muslim inmates often face spiritual disorientation, weakened moral structures, and limited access to religious education. Structured Qur'anic literacy programs can therefore foster reflection, self-discipline, and moral reconstruction during incarceration.

Previous studies on inmate empowerment have largely emphasized vocational training, psychological support, and economic skills as pathways to reintegration (Agustina et al., 2022a; Cahyono, 2014; Sisworo, 2013). While these approaches have demonstrated positive outcomes, relatively little attention has been given to structured religious literacy as a central rehabilitative strategy. Studies that address spiritual development tend to treat it as a supplementary component rather than as a systematic educational model (Agustina et al., 2022b; Baskara & others, 2025; Oktaviani & Putri, 2024; Primatanti, 2022).

This study addresses that gap by examining the transformation of Qur'anic literacy among inmates through a semi-pesantren model. It focuses on how Qur'anic literacy—when organized through pesantren-inspired pedagogy—contributes not only to reading and writing competence, but also to religious understanding and behavioral change. The study is grounded in the assumption that Qur'anic literacy constitutes a holistic educational process that integrates textual engagement, moral reflection, and practical application.

Accordingly, this research aims to (1) examine the conceptual foundations and core components of semi-pesantren-based Qur'anic literacy, and (2) analyze the implementation of Qur'anic literacy programs among inmates, particularly in relation to reading, writing, comprehension, and supporting religious instruction. By situating Qur'anic literacy within the context of correctional education, this study seeks to contribute to the development of faith-based rehabilitation models that are both pedagogically sound and socially relevant.

## 2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative field research design with a descriptive-analytical approach to examine how a semi-pesantren-based empowerment program contributes to the development of Qur'anic literacy among inmates at Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Kelas II B Kota Bitung. The study focused on understanding program implementation, learning processes, and participants' experiences in a correctional setting rather than on hypothesis testing (Creswell, 2014).

The research was conducted at Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Kelas II B Kota Bitung, located on Jalan J.P. Kalangi, Tewaan Sub-district, Ranowulu District, Bitung City, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. The site was selected purposively because it implements a structured religious education program, a semi-pesantren model for Muslim inmates, making it relevant to the study's focus on Qur'anic literacy and faith-based rehabilitation. In addition, Bitung offers a distinctive socio-cultural setting in North Sulawesi, which strengthens the contextual value of this study.

Fieldwork was conducted for two months, from 1 February 2025 to 30 March 2025. This period enabled the researcher to observe routine learning activities, interact with participants, and collect supporting institutional documents related to the semi-pesantren program.

The study involved 26 informants selected through purposive sampling. The informants consisted of 3 correctional officers, 2 program managers, and 21 inmates who participated in the semi-pesantren-based Qur'anic literacy program. Informants were selected based on their direct involvement in the planning, supervision, implementation, and participation in the program, ensuring data reflected perspectives from both institutional actors and program beneficiaries.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews used open-ended guiding questions to explore participants' experiences, perceptions of Qur'anic literacy learning, and perceived changes during program participation. Participant observation was conducted during Qur'anic literacy sessions to examine teaching strategies, instructor-inmate interaction, learning engagement, and the general educational atmosphere. Document analysis included program guidelines, activity records, institutional regulations, and internal reports related to the semi-pesantren program (Abdussamad & Sik, 2021).

Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative procedure consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were first organized and coded to identify recurring themes related to literacy development, religious learning, and behavioral change. The coded data were then grouped into categories and presented narratively to show patterns across informants and data sources. Interpretive analysis was used to explain how the semi-pesantren model operates and how participants perceive its contribution to Qur'anic literacy development and rehabilitation within the correctional environment (Abdul, 2015; Hamzah, 2021).

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied source and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from inmates, correctional officers, and program managers. Method triangulation was carried out by cross-checking findings from interviews, observations, and institutional documents. In addition, member checking was conducted with selected informants to confirm the accuracy of key interpretations and to reduce misunderstanding in the presentation of findings.

Ethical considerations were given particular attention because the study involved inmates as a vulnerable population. Before data collection, the researcher obtained

formal permission from the correctional institution. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to decline or withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence. Informed consent was obtained before interviews and observations (Creswell, 2014; Sugiyono, 2017). To protect confidentiality, participants' identities were anonymized using pseudonyms, and identifying details were omitted from the research records and reporting.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Implementation of the Semi-Pesantren Model in Qur'anic Literacy Education within the Correctional Setting

The findings indicate that the implementation of the semi-pesantren model at Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Kelas II B Kota Bitung represents an adaptive transformation of traditional pesantren literacy practices to suit the structural and regulatory context of a correctional institution. While classical pesantren education is strongly associated with the study of kitab kuning as a core marker of Islamic literacy, this tradition cannot be fully replicated within a prison environment due to time constraints, security regulations, and the diverse educational backgrounds of inmates. Consequently, the Qur'anic literacy program in Bitung Prison is intentionally framed as semi-pesantren, retaining key pedagogical elements while simplifying curricular scope.

Table 1. Structure and Components of the Semi-Pesantren-Based Qur'anic Literacy Program in Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Bitung

Program Level	Instructional Focus	Learning Content	Pedagogical Purpose
Foundational Literacy ('Iqra')	<i>Tafriq</i> method	Recognition and separation of <i>ḥijā'iyah</i> letters; basic writing practice	To build confidence and accuracy in letter recognition and basic Qur'anic reading
Foundational Literacy ('Iqra')	<i>Taushil</i> method	Connecting separated letters into words; positional letter forms	To develop reading fluency and understanding of Arabic script structure
Memorization ( <i>Tahfiz</i> )	Guided repetition and recitation	Selected Qur'anic passages, primarily <i>Juz' Amma</i>	To enhance concentration, discipline, and sustained engagement with the Qur'an
Jurisprudence ( <i>Fiqh</i> )	Text-based instruction	<i>Safinat al-Najāh</i> (basic worship and daily conduct)	To strengthen practical religious knowledge relevant to everyday life
Theology ('Aqidah)	Doctrinal clarification	Foundations of <i>Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah</i>	To reinforce theological clarity and prevent misinterpretation

Islamic History ( <i>Tārīkh</i> )	Narrative-based learning	Prophetic era, early caliphates, Islamic history in Indonesia	To situate Qur'anic literacy within a broader historical and civilizational context
Language Development	Basic language instruction	Arabic (primary), English, and other languages (limited)	To support textual understanding and post-release social adaptation
Collective Activities	Devotional and artistic practice	<i>Ḥadrah</i> and group recitation	To foster emotional expression, solidarity, and communal learning

Source: Data Analysis, 2025.

As summarized in Table 1, the semi-pesantren model implemented in Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Bitung consists of layered instructional components that integrate foundational literacy, structured religious knowledge, and collective spiritual activities." At the foundational level, Qur'anic literacy instruction begins with 'Iqra'-based learning, emphasizing the acquisition of basic reading and writing competencies. Two instructional methods—*tafriq* and *taushil*—constitute the core literacy techniques used in the program. The *tafriq* method focuses on separating connected *ḥijā'iyah* letters, enabling learners to recognize individual letter forms, write them accurately, and read them clearly even when they appear in connected script. Although commonly associated with early childhood education, field observations indicate that this method is effective across age groups, particularly among adult learners with limited prior exposure to Qur'anic reading.

Complementing the *tafriq* approach, the *taushil* method reconnects separated letters into complete word forms. In practice, this stage was more demanding than the earlier phase because participants had to recognize letter forms in different positions within words. Several inmates initially struggled with medial and final letter forms, especially those who had only recently mastered isolated *ḥijā'iyah* letters (Interview with Inmate 7, March 2025). As one participant explained, "When the letters stand alone, I can recognize them. But when they are joined, I become confused again" (Interview with Inmate 7, March 2025). This finding confirms that Qur'anic literacy development in correctional settings is rarely linear and often requires staged reinforcement rather than one-directional instruction (Fathoni, 2025; McNeill, 2014; Suadi, 2022).

In response to these difficulties, instructors modified the teaching rhythm by slowing the transition from *tafriq* to *taushil*, increasing repetition, and using more guided recitation in small groups (Interview with Program Manager 1, March 2025). Rather than enforcing a rigid lesson sequence, they adjusted sessions according to participants' literacy levels and daily conditions in the prison environment (Interview with Correctional Officer 2, March 2025). This adaptive strategy is important because prison education programs generally operate within institutional constraints that require flexibility in delivery, participation, and pacing (Jang & Johnson, 2024; Kerley, Matthews, & Blanchard, 2005).

The implementation of *tafriq* and *taushil* also faced recurring obstacles. Limited class time, varying educational backgrounds, fluctuating attendance, and inmate

transfers often disrupted continuity (Interview with Correctional Officer 1, March 2025). A correctional officer noted, “Sometimes participants are transferred or assigned other duties, so the learning process must restart with new groups” (Interview with Correctional Officer 1, March 2025). Similar implementation barriers—such as limited teaching staff and uneven learner readiness—have also been reported in other Qur’anic literacy programs in Indonesian correctional institutions (Mahmood, 2025; Romero-Carazas et al., 2025)

To address these obstacles, the instructors grouped learners according to ability and introduced peer-assisted learning, in which more advanced inmates helped beginners during recitation practice (Interview with Program Manager 2, March 2025). This adaptation not only improved instructional efficiency but also reduced embarrassment among participants who were still at the basic level (Interview with Inmate 12, March 2025; Interview with Inmate 18, March 2025). The pattern is consistent with findings in pesantren-based educational settings, where adaptive and socially embedded learning practices often become key to sustaining student engagement despite limited resources (Maruna, 2001; McNeill, 2012)

Beyond foundational reading skills, the semi-pesantren model in Bitung includes structured religious learning stages that mirror pesantren traditions while being selectively adapted to prison conditions (Interview with Program Manager 1, March 2025). At the *taḥfīz* level, inmates memorize selected passages from Juz’ Amma and short texts on daily worship (Interview with Program Manager 1, March 2025). However, memorization activities were not always stable. Some participants reported difficulty focusing due to noise, emotional stress, or institutional routines that disrupted study time (Interview with Inmate 4, March 2025; Interview with Inmate 15, March 2025). One inmate stated, “It is hard to concentrate in here, but repeating the verses helps calm my mind” (Interview with Inmate 4, March 2025). This supports broader scholarship on faith-based rehabilitation, showing that religious programs in prisons often function not only as instructional spaces but also as sites of emotional regulation, meaning-making, and identity reconstruction (Jang et al., 2021; Kerley, Matthews, & Schulz, 2005).

In response, instructors shortened memorization targets, increased collective repetition, and allowed participants to progress in smaller units (Interview with Program Manager 2, March 2025). These adaptations suggest that the effectiveness of *taḥfīz* in prison settings depends less on formal targets and more on pedagogical responsiveness to participants’ psychological and situational conditions.

Instruction in *fiqh*, centered on *Safinat al-Najāh*, emphasizes practical religious obligations relevant to inmates’ daily routines in the correctional environment (Interview with Program Manager 2, March 2025). Rather than focusing on abstract legal reasoning, the lessons prioritize basic worship practices, purification, prayer, and social conduct (*mu’āmalāt*) that participants can directly apply. Instructors frequently simplified explanations and repeated core terms because participants had diverse educational and religious backgrounds (Interview with Correctional Officer 3, March 2025; Interview with Program Manager 1, March 2025). This simplification

was not a dilution of content, but a pedagogical adaptation intended to ensure comprehension and continuity.

Similarly, *'aqidah* instruction was positioned as a corrective and stabilizing component of the program (Interview with Program Manager 1, March 2025). Facilitators observed that several inmates had previously learned religion informally through fragmented sources and social media, resulting in partial or inconsistent understanding (Interview with Program Manager 1, March 2025). As one program manager remarked, "Many of them learned religion informally. Here we try to rebuild it in a structured way" (Interview with Program Manager 1, March 2025). In this respect, *'aqidah* teaching in the semi-pesantren model serves not only a doctrinal function but also a pedagogical one: it provides a coherent framework through which Qur'anic reading, worship, and moral conduct can be understood together.

Historical instruction (*tāriḫ*) and basic language learning further broaden the curriculum, although their implementation remains conditional on time allocation and instructor availability (Interview with Program Manager 2, March 2025). In practice, these components were sometimes shortened when foundational literacy sessions required additional time (Interview with Correctional Officer 2, March 2025). This indicates that the semi-pesantren curriculum in Bitung is not implemented as a fixed template but rather as a negotiable, context-sensitive framework, which aligns with studies that highlight that pesantren-derived educational models often survive through selective adaptation rather than rigid replication (Kerley & Copes, 2009; O'Connor & Perreyclear, 2002).

Collective activities such as *ḥaḍrah* also play an important role in the program by creating space for emotional expression and positive peer interaction (Field Observation, March 2025; Interview with Inmate 10, March 2025). Participants described these sessions as moments of solidarity and relief from the pressure of daily prison routines (Interview with Inmate 10, March 2025; Interview with Inmate 19, March 2025). Instructors similarly noted that group devotional practices reduced tension and improved inmate interaction (Interview with Correctional Officer 3, March 2025). This finding is significant because it shows that the semi-pesantren model works not only through formal instruction, but also through communal and affective practices that support moral formation and social adjustment, which are central concerns in faith-based rehabilitation literature (Jang & Johnson, 2024; Munjahid & Kuswanto, 2024; Sundt & Cullen, 2002).

Overall, the implementation of the semi-pesantren model in Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Bitung demonstrates that Qur'anic literacy development in prison is most effective when it is treated as an adaptive educational process rather than a purely technical reading program (Interview with Program Manager 1, March 2025). Its strength lies in combining staged literacy instruction (*tafrīq-taushīl*), structured religious learning (*taḥfīz*, *fiqh*, *'aqidah*, *tāriḫ*), and communal practices (*ḥaḍrah*) while continuously adjusting to institutional constraints, inmate diversity, and the practical realities of incarceration (Interview with Correctional Officer 1, March 2025; Interview with Inmate 7, March 2025). This adaptive character is precisely what gives the program its rehabilitative value in context.

## Transformation of Qur'anic Literacy Competence among Inmates

The findings indicate that participation in the semi-pesantren-based program was associated with changes in inmates' Qur'anic literacy, although the pace and depth of change varied across participants (Interview with Program Manager 1, March 2025). Rather than showing uniform success, the data suggest a gradual, uneven process shaped by prior educational experience, motivation, and attendance consistency (Interview with Correctional Officer 1, March 2025; Interview with Inmate 7, March 2025). This pattern is consistent with qualitative studies of Qur'anic education in correctional settings, which emphasize differing learner trajectories and institutional constraints (Baskara & others, 2025; Dessy Debrilianawati et al., 2013; McNeill, 2012).

At the entry stage, many inmates described their Qur'anic literacy as limited or discontinuous. Several participants could identify some *hijā'iyah* letters but struggled to read connected script, while others reported long interruptions in religious learning before incarceration (Interview with Inmate 3, March 2025; Interview with Inmate 11, March 2025). One inmate stated, "I used to learn when I was a child, but after that I stopped for years. When I joined here, I remembered some letters, but not how to read them properly" (Interview with Inmate 11, March 2025). Another participant explained that fear of making mistakes reduced his willingness to read in front of others: "I was embarrassed because my reading was slow, so I preferred to stay quiet" (Interview with Inmate 6, March 2025). These accounts show that the initial barrier was not only technical but also emotional.

After participating in sessions using *tafrīq* and *taushīl*, many inmates showed improvement in basic reading confidence and letter recognition, but not to the same level or at the same speed. For some participants, progress was visible in their ability to identify letters in connected forms and complete short verses with guidance (Interview with Program Manager 2, March 2025). One instructor noted, "Some inmates progressed quickly once they understood letter patterns, but others needed repeated practice for the same lesson" (Interview with Program Manager 2, March 2025). This variation is important because it challenges the assumption of a single pathway of success and reflects the realities of adult learning in restrictive environments (Baskara & others, 2025; Primatanti, 2022).

Observational data also showed differences in participation intensity. Inmates who attended regularly and practiced outside class tended to read more confidently during group recitation, while those with irregular attendance often repeated earlier stages (Interview with Correctional Officer 2, March 2025). A correctional officer explained, "Those who join consistently usually improve faster. But some cannot attend regularly because of internal schedules, so their progress is slower" (Interview with Correctional Officer 2, March 2025). This finding suggests that changes in literacy cannot be attributed solely to teaching methods; institutional routines and access to learning time also matter.

The development of writing ability and familiarity with script was also uneven. Some inmates became more accurate in writing *hijā'iyah* letters and recognizing positional forms, especially when writing practice was combined with recitation

(Interview with Inmate 14, March 2025). Others, however, still found writing more difficult than reading because they were not accustomed to writing Arabic script by hand (Interview with Inmate 9, March 2025). One participant commented, "Reading is easier for me now, but writing is still difficult because I forget the shape when the letters are connected" (Interview with Inmate 9, March 2025). This difference indicates that "Qur'anic literacy" in practice involves multiple competencies that may not develop simultaneously.

At the *tahfīz* stage, participants likewise reported different experiences. Some inmates found memorization helpful for structuring their day and calming their thoughts, while others struggled with concentration and retention (Interview with Inmate 4, March 2025; Interview with Inmate 16, March 2025). One inmate said, "Repeating short surahs helps me stay focused and feel calmer" (Interview with Inmate 4, March 2025). By contrast, another noted, "I can memorize in class, but I forget again later if I do not repeat it at night" (Interview with Inmate 16, March 2025). These differences reinforce the point that the program's impact should be understood as layered and contingent, not uniformly transformative. Scholarship on religion-based rehabilitation similarly shows that spiritual and behavioral effects often emerge gradually and are mediated by personal readiness and institutional context (Baskara & others, 2025; Jang et al., 2021; Kerley et al., 2011; Primatanti, 2022).

The findings also indicate that for several inmates, improvements in reading practice were accompanied by a more reflective engagement with religious learning, particularly through *fiqh* and *'aqidah* sessions (Interview with Program Manager 1, March 2025; Interview with Inmate 18, March 2025). However, this was not equally pronounced among all participants. Some inmates were able to relate Qur'anic learning to discipline, daily prayer, and interpersonal conduct, while others remained focused mainly on basic recitation (Interview with Inmate 18, March 2025; Interview with Inmate 5, March 2025). As one participant expressed, "Before, I only listened. Now I try to understand what I read and apply it, especially in how I speak to others" (Interview with Inmate 18, March 2025). Another participant, however, described his goal more narrowly: "For now I just want to read correctly first" (Interview with Inmate 5, March 2025). This range of responses is analytically important because it shows that literacy development and religious reflection do not always move at the same pace.

Interview data further suggest that increased confidence was one of the most consistent outcomes across participants, even when technical ability varied (Interview with Inmate 7, March 2025; Interview with Inmate 12, March 2025). Several inmates reported being more willing to read aloud, ask questions, or study with peers than before joining the program. In this sense, the program's contribution may be better described not as "measurable progress" in a quantitative sense, but as qualitative changes in participation, confidence, and continuity of engagement (Interview with Program Manager 2, March 2025). This interpretation aligns with qualitative prison education research, which often treats motivation, identity, and participation as key indicators of rehabilitative learning processes (Munjahid & Kuswanto, 2024; Suadi, 2022).

Overall, the transformation of Qur'anic literacy in this study is best understood as a gradual, differentiated process. Some inmates advanced from letter recognition to short guided reading, some strengthened memorization and routine, and others primarily gained confidence to participate in religious learning (Interview with Correctional Officer 1, March 2025). The semi-pesantren model supported these developments by providing a structured but flexible learning environment, yet the findings do not suggest identical outcomes for all participants. Instead, they show a range of literacy trajectories shaped by pedagogical support, inmate background, and the practical conditions of prison life.

### **Behavioral and Spiritual Implications of Qur'anic Literacy for Inmate Rehabilitation**

The transformation of Qur'anic literacy among inmates at Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Kelas II B Kota Bitung was accompanied by discernible behavioral and spiritual changes that are closely linked to the rehabilitation process. The findings suggest that Qur'anic literacy, when delivered through a semi-pesantren model, functions not only as an educational intervention but also as a formative mechanism shaping attitudes, emotional regulation, and social interaction within the correctional environment.

One of the most visible implications concerns behavioral discipline. Correctional officers and program facilitators reported improvements in punctuality, compliance with institutional rules, and participation in structured activities among inmates involved in the program. Regular engagement with Qur'anic reading, memorization, and study sessions introduced a routine that helped inmates structure their daily lives. This structured engagement reduced idle time and led to more predictable, constructive behavioral patterns.

Table 2. Behavioral and Spiritual Implications of Qur'anic Literacy among Inmates in Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Bitung

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Observed Changes</b>	<b>Empirical Indicators</b>	<b>Relevance to Rehabilitation</b>
Behavioral Discipline	Increased compliance with institutional rules and schedules	Improved punctuality, consistent attendance in literacy sessions, and reduced idle behavior	Supports institutional order and structured daily routines
Emotional Regulation	Greater emotional stability and calmness	Reduced interpersonal tension, fewer emotional outbursts, reported inner calm during recitation.	Contributes to psychological resilience and stress management
Moral Awareness	Heightened sense of responsibility and self-reflection	Expressions of remorse, ethical reasoning in interviews, and engagement with <i>fiqh</i> discussions	Facilitates moral reconstruction and accountability

Social Interaction	More cooperative peer relationships	Emergence of peer-led study groups, mutual correction in Qur'anic reading	Strengthens prosocial behavior and reduces isolation
Spiritual Engagement	Increased religious commitment and consistency	Voluntary Qur'anic reading, memorization outside scheduled sessions	Reinforces spiritual motivation and personal meaning
Identity Reconstruction	Shift toward positive self-perception	Articulation of future-oriented goals and intentions for change	Supports identity reformation and reintegration readiness
Communal Solidarity	Stronger sense of belonging	Participation in collective practices such as <i>ḥaḍrah</i>	Builds social cohesion and emotional support networks

Source: Data Analysis, 2025.

As illustrated in Table 2, the development of Qur'anic literacy among inmates was associated with multidimensional changes encompassing behavioral discipline, emotional regulation, and spiritual engagement, all of which are closely linked to rehabilitative outcomes. From a spiritual perspective, increased engagement with the Qur'an fostered heightened self-reflection and moral awareness. Inmates frequently described the learning process as an opportunity to reassess past actions and personal responsibility. Exposure to basic teachings in 'aqidah and fiqh encouraged participants to reinterpret their life experiences through ethical and religious frameworks, enabling them to articulate remorse, intention for change, and personal accountability in more coherent terms. This reflective dimension is particularly significant in a correctional setting, where identity reconstruction is a central rehabilitative goal.

Emotional regulation emerged as one of the most frequently reported outcomes, but the intensity of change varied across participants (Interview with Program Manager 1, March 2025). Several inmates described regular recitation and memorization as practices that helped them manage anxiety, anger, and restlessness. One inmate stated, "When I recite after Maghrib, I feel calmer. I still get upset sometimes, but not as quickly as before" (Interview with Inmate 4, March 2025). A correctional officer similarly observed, "Some participants became easier to approach and less reactive during daily interaction, especially those who were active in the program" (Interview with Correctional Officer 3, March 2025). However, not all inmates reported the same effect. Another participant noted that emotional calm was temporary and depended on whether he continued recitation outside class hours: "If I do not repeat at night, my mind becomes crowded again" (Interview with Inmate 16, March 2025). This variation is important and aligns with faith-based rehabilitation studies showing that emotional and moral change in prison is often gradual, uneven, and shaped by personal readiness and institutional context, rather than uniformly experienced by all participants.

Collective practices—such as group recitation and *ḥaḍrah*—also contributed to emotional bonding and peer support, though, as before, with varying levels of participation (Interview with Inmate 10, March 2025). Some inmates described these activities as moments of relief from the pressure of prison routines and as spaces

where they felt accepted by peers. As one participant explained, “When we read together, I do not feel alone. If I make mistakes, others help me” (Interview with Inmate 10, March 2025). Officers also noted that group religious activities reduced visible tension among some participants, especially those who had previously withdrawn from communal interaction (Interview with Correctional Officer 2, March 2025). At the same time, field observations showed that a few inmates remained passive during collective sessions and participated only when directly encouraged by instructors. This suggests that communal religious activities can support social-emotional regulation, but their effect depends on participation patterns and peer dynamics (Mahmood, 2025; Nurcholis, 1997).

Changes in social behavior within the prison environment were also evident, particularly in informal peer learning. Improved Qur’anic reading ability enabled some inmates to join or initiate small study groups, correct each other’s recitation, and share memorization routines (Interview with Inmate 12, March 2025). One inmate reported, “Before, I avoided reading with others because I was ashamed. Now I can sit with friends and practice together” (Interview with Inmate 12, March 2025). A program manager described this as a shift from individual hesitation to collaborative learning: “The stronger readers now help beginners. That did not happen much at the start” (Interview with Program Manager 2, March 2025). Still, this pattern was not universal. Some participants remained focused on individual recitation and did not engage consistently in peer-led sessions (Interview with Inmate 5, March 2025). Presenting this variation is methodologically important because it shows that literacy-related social change developed along multiple trajectories rather than a single pattern of success.

Importantly, the rehabilitative implications of Qur’anic literacy in this study were more clearly expressed in participants’ changing self-perceptions than in any quantifiable behavioral claim. Several inmates articulated aspirations for post-release life, including intentions to continue Qur’anic study, attend mosque-based learning circles, and improve family relationships (Interview with Inmate 18, March 2025; Interview with Inmate 7, March 2025). One inmate remarked, “I want to continue learning after release, not stop like before. At least I can guide my children to read” (Interview with Inmate 18, March 2025). Another stated, “Here I started again. Outside, I want to join a mosque group, so I do not return to old habits” (Interview with Inmate 7, March 2025). These statements should not be treated as proof of long-term outcomes. Still, they indicate a shift in moral orientation and future self-understanding, a key theme in the rehabilitation literature on religion and desistance.

At the same time, the sustainability issue remains open and requires careful consideration. Because the fieldwork covered two months (1 February–30 March 2025), this study documents changes during program participation but cannot verify whether emotional stability, social cooperation, or religious routines persist after inmates leave the program or are released. A correctional officer highlighted this limitation directly: “Some inmates improve while the program is active, but we do not always know who keeps the habit later” (Interview with Correctional Officer 1, March 2025). This reviewer’s concern is valid, and it points to the need for follow-up or

longitudinal research. Studies on prison-based religious rehabilitation in other settings similarly emphasize that short-term changes in prison do not automatically translate into sustained post-release transformation without ongoing support structures (Jang et al., 2021; Kerley, Matthews, & Blanchard, 2005).

The semi-pesantren model appears to mediate these outcomes by combining structured instruction, repeated practice, and relational guidance, rather than treating religious education as a symbolic prison activity (Interview with Program Manager 1, March 2025). This pattern is comparable to findings from other correctional contexts where faith-based programs are most effective when they integrate knowledge transmission, community formation, and moral mentoring. In Indonesian prison contexts, recent studies on Qur'anic and Islamic guidance programs also report similar mechanisms – namely routine religious learning, peer support, and instructor consistency – as important supports for behavioral and spiritual adjustment. However, the Bitung case contributes a distinctive feature: the semi-pesantren format adapts pesantren-style stages (*tahsīn*/reading, *tahfīz*, *fiqh*, *'aqīdah*, and communal devotion) within a correctional institution in North Sulawesi, where local institutional constraints and inmate diversity require continuous pedagogical adjustment.

In sum, the findings support the view that Qur'anic literacy can contribute to rehabilitation when it is framed as a holistic learning process that connects cognitive, emotional, moral, and social dimensions. At the same time, the data do not support a claim of uniform transformation across all participants. Instead, they show differentiated outcomes: some inmates reported stronger emotional regulation, some developed cooperative learning habits, and others mainly gained confidence and motivation to continue learning. This more cautious interpretation is consistent with qualitative research standards and better reflects the complexity of faith-based rehabilitation in correctional settings.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that Qur'anic literacy in correctional settings cannot be reduced to the technical ability to read or write Arabic script. In the semi-pesantren program at Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Kelas II B Kota Bitung, Qur'anic literacy developed as a layered process that combined foundational reading skills, religious understanding, emotional regulation, and social learning within a structured yet adaptive educational model. The program's staged design – from *tafrīq* and *taushīl* to *fiqh*, *'aqīdah*, Islamic history, and collective practices such as *ḥaḍrah* – enabled inmates to engage the Qur'an not only as text, but also as a source of moral reflection and social discipline. The article's main conceptual contribution is the seven-dimensional change framework presented in Table 2, which is affirmed here as an original finding. This framework synthesizes the key domains of change observed during the program, including literacy competence, religious understanding, emotional regulation, discipline, social interaction, self-confidence, and moral orientation. It offers a more holistic lens for analysing faith-based rehabilitation in prison contexts.

At the same time, this study has important limitations. The fieldwork lasted only two months, so the findings capture changes during program participation but cannot confirm their long-term sustainability after release. The study is also limited to one correctional institution, making the findings context-specific rather than broadly

generalizable, and the qualitative design prioritizes lived experience over standardized outcome measurement. These limits point to a clear future research agenda: longitudinal studies to examine whether changes persist beyond incarceration, comparative studies across correctional institutions to test the transferability of the semi-pesantren model, and mixed-method research to connect qualitative change trajectories with rehabilitation indicators. Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of faith-based rehabilitation by showing that religious literacy should be understood not only as cognitive instruction but as a pedagogical process that links moral formation, emotional discipline, and social participation.

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