

Predictive Association of Muhafazhah Mufradat Participation Intensity with Arabic Reading Comprehension at Mambaus Sholihin

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of the intensity of participation in muhafazhah mufradat activities on the Arabic reading skill (maharah al-qira'ah) of santri at Mambaus Sholihin Islamic Boarding School. A quantitative ex post facto correlational design was employed. The population consisted of 112 santri participating in the structured Arabic language program, from which 85 respondents were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling. The independent variable was measured using an 18-item Likert-scale questionnaire supported by attendance and target-completion records, while reading skill was measured using a 30-item Arabic reading test covering vocabulary-in-context, sentence comprehension, main ideas, explicit and implicit information, and grammatical interpretation. Instrument validity was established through expert judgment and item-total analysis; reliability coefficients were 0.87 for the intensity scale and 0.82 for the reading test. Descriptive analysis showed that the mean intensity score was 78.34 (SD = 8.92), while the mean reading score was 81.12 (SD = 7.64). Pearson correlation indicated a strong positive relationship between the variables ($r = 0.684$, $p < 0.001$). Simple linear regression produced the equation $Y = 35.29 + 0.585X$, with $R^2 = 0.468$, $F(1,83) = 72.97$, $p < 0.001$. Thus, the intensity of participating in muhafazhah mufradat explained 46.8% of the variance in maharah al-qira'ah. The findings indicate that consistent attendance, repetition, target completion, and active retrieval of memorized vocabulary contribute meaningfully to reading comprehension, although grammar knowledge, reading strategy, and prior linguistic competence remain important additional factors.

Keywords: Arabic Reading; Maharah al-Qira'ah; Mufradat; Pesantren; Vocabulary Memorization

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menguji pengaruh intensitas mengikuti kegiatan muhafazhah mufradat terhadap keterampilan membaca bahasa Arab (maharah al-qira'ah) santri Pondok Pesantren Mambaus Sholihin. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain ex post facto korelasional. Populasi penelitian berjumlah 112 santri yang mengikuti program bahasa Arab terstruktur dan sebanyak 85 responden dipilih menggunakan proportionate stratified random sampling. Variabel intensitas diukur dengan angket Likert 18 butir yang diperkuat data kehadiran dan pencapaian target hafalan, sedangkan maharah al-qira'ah diukur melalui tes membaca bahasa Arab 30 butir yang mencakup pemahaman kosakata dalam konteks, pemahaman kalimat, ide pokok, informasi eksplisit dan implisit, serta interpretasi gramatikal. Koefisien reliabilitas instrumen adalah 0,87 untuk skala intensitas dan 0,82 untuk tes membaca. Hasil deskriptif menunjukkan skor rata-rata intensitas 78,34 (SD = 8,92) dan skor rata-rata membaca 81,12 (SD = 7,64). Korelasi Pearson menunjukkan hubungan positif yang kuat ($r = 0,684$; $p < 0,001$). Regresi linear sederhana menghasilkan persamaan $Y = 35,29 + 0,585X$ dengan $R^2 = 0,468$, $F(1,83) = 72,97$, $p < 0,001$. Dengan demikian, intensitas mengikuti muhafazhah mufradat menjelaskan 46,8% variasi keterampilan membaca. Temuan menegaskan bahwa konsistensi kehadiran, pengulangan, pencapaian target, dan pemanggilan kembali kosakata secara aktif memberi kontribusi bermakna terhadap pemahaman bacaan bahasa Arab.

Kata-kata Kunci: Maharah al-Qira'ah; Mufradat; Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab; Pesantren; Tahfizh Kosakata

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the central receptive skills in Arabic language education because it enables learners to access religious texts, academic materials, classical Islamic literature, and contemporary written discourse. In pesantren, maharah al-qira'ah has an especially strategic role because students are expected to engage with Arabic texts not merely as classroom exercises but as sources of religious knowledge. Successful reading requires the integration of orthographic recognition, lexical access, morphological awareness, grammatical processing, inferencing, and discourse-level comprehension. A recent scoping review confirms that Arabic reading comprehension is shaped by interacting metalinguistic components, including morphological and orthographic knowledge (Bin Sawad et al., 2022). Vocabulary is therefore not an isolated subskill; it is one of the principal resources through which readers build meaning from Arabic text.

Vocabulary knowledge has repeatedly been identified as a major predictor of reading comprehension. In Arabic as a foreign language, Messouab (2024) found that receptive vocabulary knowledge is a fundamental factor in reading comprehension, while Hammou (2024) showed that vocabulary coverage is related to comprehension outcomes although high lexical coverage alone does not automatically guarantee successful reading. These findings are important for pesantren education, where students frequently encounter texts containing dense lexical and morphological information. Limited knowledge of mufradat can slow lexical retrieval, increase dependence on translation, and reduce the cognitive resources available for understanding syntactic and semantic relationships across a passage.

Arabic vocabulary learning in Indonesian educational contexts is implemented through diverse approaches, including direct teaching, contextualization, mnemonic techniques, imitation and memorization, language games, reading-based learning, and technology-supported activities. S & Baroroh (2020) argue that vocabulary strategies should be adjusted to learners' proficiency levels, while Bakker (2020) demonstrates that the way vocabulary is taught and practiced influences the development of Arabic lexical proficiency. More recently, Alfian et al. (2025) reviewed Arabic vocabulary learning methods and identified memorization, repetition, multimodal practice, sentence construction, cooperative learning, and digital activities as recurring strategies (Alfian et al., 2025). Although modern vocabulary pedagogy emphasizes meaningful use, memorization remains pedagogically relevant when it is combined with repetition, retrieval, contextual application, and cumulative review.

Within pesantren language programs, muhafazhah mufradat refers to a structured activity in which santri memorize, repeat, review, and demonstrate mastery of selected Arabic vocabulary. The activity may include daily or weekly targets, oral checking, peer review, teacher supervision, and the use of memorized words in sentences or conversation. Its pedagogical logic is closely related to retrieval practice and spaced repetition: vocabulary becomes more readily accessible when learners repeatedly recall lexical items rather than merely re-read them. Studies in Indonesian pesantren show that systematic vocabulary learning strengthens learners' lexical repertoire and contributes to broader Arabic proficiency (Munthe et al., 2022; Nasution, 2023; Mahmudah et al., 2025). A 2025 evaluation of a repetition-based vocabulary program by Nuuriyyah et al. likewise highlights the role of intensive *tikrar* in strengthening vocabulary retention and use (Nuuriyyah et al., 2025).

Mambaus Sholihin Islamic Boarding School is particularly relevant for investigating this relationship because Arabic is embedded in a wider language environment. Recent research at the female Mambaus Sholihin pesantren documents a bilingual policy and a linguistic landscape that gives Arabic a visible and functional position in students' daily environment (Maf'udah et al., 2025). Such an environment creates opportunities for memorized vocabulary to be encountered again in notices, routines, conversations, and learning activities. In this context, the intensity with which students participate in muhafazhah mufradat may matter as much as the formal existence of the activity itself. Two students may belong to the same program but differ substantially in attendance, consistency, repetition, achievement of memorization targets, and willingness to retrieve the words outside the memorization session.

The concept of intensity in this study therefore refers to the degree of sustained engagement in the muhafazhah mufradat program. It includes four observable dimensions: regular participation, frequency of repetition and review, completion of assigned memorization targets, and active retrieval or use of memorized vocabulary. This operationalization is consistent with vocabulary-learning research showing that repetition and strategy use influence lexical learning outcomes (Alahmadi & Foltz, 2020), and with Arabic vocabulary studies emphasizing that systematic practice is necessary because learners often experience difficulty retaining words over time (Jayanti et al., 2022). Intensity is thus not understood as the number of words memorized alone, but as a pattern of behavioral engagement that increases repeated

contact with lexical items.

Several quantitative and mixed-method studies have indicated a close connection between vocabulary learning and reading. Ulum (2020) reported substantial improvement in reading-related performance after structured Arabic vocabulary learning using worksheets and an independent dictionary. Nasution (2023) found that a mufradat memorization program was effective for Arabic reading comprehension among pesantren students. In a broader Arabic-as-a-foreign-language context, Messouab (2024) reported that vocabulary knowledge had a meaningful effect on reading comprehension. These studies provide a strong empirical basis for expecting a positive relationship, but they do not fully answer a more specific question: whether differences in the intensity of participation in an established muhafazhah mufradat activity within a language-rich pesantren environment significantly predict differences in santri's maharah al-qira'ah.

This distinction constitutes the research gap addressed in the present study. Previous work has frequently examined vocabulary mastery as a cognitive outcome, compared teaching methods, or evaluated a vocabulary program as a whole. Less attention has been given to participation intensity as a behavioral predictor within an existing pesantren routine. Examining intensity is important because institutional programs do not affect all learners uniformly. The educational effect of a well-designed program may depend on how consistently students actually participate and review the material. By treating participation intensity as an independent variable and reading skill as the dependent variable, the present study provides a quantitative estimate of the contribution of everyday vocabulary-learning engagement to Arabic reading performance.

Accordingly, this study aims to: 1) describe the intensity of santri participation in muhafazhah mufradat activities; 2) describe their maharah al-qira'ah; 3) test the relationship between the two variables; and 4) determine the magnitude of the effect of muhafazhah mufradat participation intensity on reading skill. The statistical hypothesis states that higher participation intensity significantly and positively predicts higher maharah al-qira'ah scores. The null hypothesis states that participation intensity does not significantly predict reading skill. The novelty of this study lies in operationalizing muhafazhah mufradat not merely as a program label or vocabulary score, but as a measurable pattern of participation that can be linked statistically to reading outcomes in the specific sociolinguistic environment of Mambaus Sholihin.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an ex post facto correlational design. The design was selected because the muhafazhah mufradat activity was already part of the pesantren language program and the researcher did not manipulate students' participation. The study examined naturally occurring variation in the intensity of participation and tested whether that variation predicted differences in Arabic reading skill. Data collection was conducted during the 2025/2026 academic year at Mambaus Sholihin Islamic Boarding School, Gresik, East Java, Indonesia.

The research population consisted of 112 santri at the intermediate and upper levels who had participated in the structured Arabic language program for at least one semester. A sample of 85 santri was selected through proportionate stratified random sampling so that each instructional level was represented in accordance with its proportion in the population (Wahab & Junaedi, 2022). Inclusion criteria were active enrollment, participation in the muhafazhah mufradat program, and completion of both research instruments. The sample size was considered adequate for bivariate correlation and simple linear regression with one predictor.

The independent variable, intensity of participation in muhafazhah mufradat (X), was measured using an 18-item Likert-scale instrument with five response categories ranging from 1 (never/strongly disagree) to 5 (always/strongly agree). The scale covered four dimensions: attendance and consistency, frequency of repetition and review, completion of memorization targets, and active retrieval/use of memorized vocabulary. To reduce exclusive dependence on self-report, questionnaire scores were cross-checked with attendance summaries and memorization target records maintained by the language section. The questionnaire score was transformed to a 0-100 scale for interpretation.

The dependent variable, maharah al-qira'ah (Y), was measured using a researcher-developed 30-item test based on short and medium-length Arabic passages appropriate to the students' level. The test assessed five domains: vocabulary in context, sentence-level comprehension, identification of main ideas, retrieval of explicit and implicit information, and grammatical-semantic interpretation. Items consisted primarily of multiple-choice questions with one correct answer. Each correct answer received one point, and the total score was converted to a 0-100 scale.

Content validity was established through expert review by two Arabic language education lecturers and one pesantren Arabic instructor. Items were evaluated for relevance, clarity, difficulty, and alignment with the operational indicators. A pilot test was conducted with 30 santri outside the research sample. Corrected item-total correlations for the intensity scale exceeded the minimum criterion for retained items, and Cronbach's alpha was 0.87. The reading test was examined through item difficulty, discrimination, and reliability analysis; 30 items were retained and the KR-20 reliability coefficient was 0.82. These coefficients indicated good internal consistency for both instruments.

Data analysis was performed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, and categorical distributions. Before hypothesis testing, the data were examined for normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and inspection of residual plots indicated that the assumptions were acceptable. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to estimate the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables (Allison et al., 2022). Simple linear regression was then used to estimate the predictive effect of participation intensity on reading skill. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to estimate the proportion of variance in maharah al-qira'ah explained by participation intensity.

Table 1. Operationalization of Research Variables and Instruments

Variable	Dimension/Indicator	Instrument	Score
Muhafazhah mufradat intensity (X)	Attendance and consistency; repetition/review; target completion; active retrieval/use	18-item Likert scale + attendance/target records	0-100
Maharah al-qira'ah (Y)	Vocabulary in context; sentence comprehension; main idea; explicit/implicit information; grammatical-semantic interpretation	30-item Arabic reading test	0-100

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The descriptive findings show that participation in muhafazhah mufradat was generally high but not uniform across the sample. The intensity scores ranged from 54 to 94, with a mean of 78.34 and a standard deviation of 8.92. The reading scores ranged from 62 to 96, with a mean of 81.12 and a standard deviation of 7.64. These values indicate that most participants were actively involved in the vocabulary memorization program and that the average level of reading performance was good. Nevertheless, the score ranges show meaningful individual variation, allowing the relationship between the two variables to be statistically examined.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Muhafazhah mufradat intensity	85	54	94	78.34	8.92
Maharah al-qira'ah	85	62	96	81.12	7.64

Categorical analysis reinforces this pattern. Eighteen santri (21.2%) were classified as having very high participation intensity, 46 (54.1%) high intensity, 17 (20.0%) moderate intensity, and four (4.7%) low intensity. No participant fell into the very low category. For reading skill, 24 santri (28.2%) were in the very good category, 44 (51.8%) in the good category, 14 (16.5%) in the moderate category, and three (3.5%) in the low category. A cross-reading of the distributions suggested that higher-intensity groups contained a larger proportion of students with good or very good reading outcomes.

Assumption testing supported the use of parametric analysis. The standardized regression residuals did not show severe departure from normality, and the relationship between participation intensity and reading score was approximately linear. A scatterplot inspection showed a positive upward pattern without a pronounced curvilinear trend. Homoscedasticity inspection indicated that the residual spread was reasonably stable across predicted values. These results justified the subsequent Pearson correlation and simple linear regression analyses.

Pearson correlation analysis produced $r = 0.684$ with $p < 0.001$. The coefficient indicates a strong positive relationship: santri who participated more consistently and intensively in muhafazhah mufradat tended to obtain higher maharah al-qira'ah scores. The null hypothesis of no relationship was therefore rejected. The relationship was substantial but not perfect, which is theoretically reasonable because Arabic reading depends on multiple components beyond vocabulary activity, including grammatical knowledge,

morphological awareness, prior reading experience, motivation, and the use of comprehension strategies.

Table 3. Correlation and Simple Linear Regression Results

Predictor	r	R ²	B	SE B	t / F	p
Muhafazhah mufradat intensity	0.684	0.468	0.585	0.068	t = 8.54; F = 72.97	< 0.001

Simple linear regression confirmed that participation intensity significantly predicted reading skill, $F(1,83) = 72.97$, $p < 0.001$. The unstandardized regression coefficient was $B = 0.585$ ($SE = 0.068$), producing the prediction equation $Y = 35.29 + 0.585X$. In practical terms, every one-point increase in the intensity score was associated with an estimated 0.585-point increase in the reading score within the observed range. The coefficient of determination was $R^2 = 0.468$, indicating that 46.8% of the variance in maharah al-qira'ah could be statistically explained by differences in participation intensity. The remaining 53.2% is attributable to variables not included in this model and to random variation.

A closer look at the dimensions of participation suggested that regular repetition and target completion were especially consistent among high-scoring readers. Students who routinely revisited previously memorized words and completed the assigned targets were less dependent on word-by-word translation when reading. They appeared to recognize common lexical items more rapidly and were better able to allocate attention to sentence meaning. Active retrieval also seemed important: santri who reported using memorized vocabulary in sentences, oral drills, or peer interaction tended to show stronger contextual interpretation than students whose memorization was limited to short-term recitation for checking purposes.

Discussion

The Relationship Between Muhafazhah Mufradat Participation Intensity and Maharah Al-Qira'ah

The central finding of this study is that the intensity of participating in muhafazhah mufradat has a statistically significant and educationally meaningful effect on santri's maharah al-qira'ah. The strong positive correlation ($r = 0.684$) indicates that higher participation intensity is associated with better Arabic reading performance. Furthermore, the regression result shows that participation intensity accounts for 46.8% of the variance in reading performance ($R^2 = 0.468$). These findings suggest that participation in vocabulary memorization activities is not merely a routine component of the pesantren language program but is also associated with the development of vocabulary accessibility during reading.

These findings have important implications for Arabic language teaching in pesantren. The existence of a muhafazhah mufradat program alone may not be sufficient to support reading development; its educational value also depends on the consistency and quality of santri participation. Regular attendance, completion of memorization targets, and systematic review should therefore be considered important pedagogical indicators rather than merely administrative or disciplinary requirements. In addition, vocabulary memorization should be connected to reading activities so that santri can apply their lexical knowledge when interpreting Arabic texts. Such an approach may help bridge the gap between memorizing individual words and understanding the meaning of sentences and passages.

The relationship between participation intensity and reading performance can be explained through repeated lexical encounters and retrieval. Santri who participate more consistently have more opportunities to memorize, recall, and review vocabulary. These repeated encounters may strengthen the connection between word forms and their meanings, making lexical recognition more efficient when the words appear in reading passages. Consequently, santri may spend less time identifying unfamiliar vocabulary and have more cognitive resources available for processing clauses, sentence relationships, and overall textual meaning. Repeated retrieval is particularly relevant because it requires learners to reconstruct words from memory rather than merely recognize them through passive re-reading. Alahmadi & Foltz (2020) show that language skills and vocabulary-learning strategy use interact with lexical learning, while the Arabic-focused literature emphasizes the importance of repeated and level-appropriate vocabulary practice (Bakker, 2020; S & Baroroh, 2020). Nevertheless, this explanation should be understood as a plausible mechanism underlying the observed relationship rather than definitive proof of causation.

The findings indicate that participation intensity represents an important dimension of the vocabulary-learning process that may help explain differences in santri's reading performance. However, the results do not mean that frequent memorization alone guarantees successful reading comprehension. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.468$) indicates that participation intensity explains 46.8% of the variance in reading performance, while the remaining 53.2% is associated with other factors not explained by the model. These factors may include grammatical knowledge, morphological awareness, contextual

interpretation, and higher-order inferencing. Santri may recognize the meanings of individual words but still misunderstand a sentence if they cannot identify verbal patterns, attached pronouns, grammatical relationships, or changes in contextual meaning. Therefore, muhafazhah mufradat should be interpreted as one important component of Arabic reading development rather than a comprehensive solution to reading difficulties.

The present findings are consistent with Messouab (2024), who found that receptive vocabulary knowledge is a fundamental factor in Arabic reading comprehension, and Hammou (2024), who demonstrated a relationship between vocabulary coverage and reading outcomes. The findings also support Nasution (2023), whose study reported that a mufradat memorization program was effective in supporting Arabic reading comprehension. Nevertheless, the present study extends these findings by examining behavioral participation intensity rather than focusing exclusively on vocabulary knowledge or evaluating the effectiveness of a particular intervention. This distinction is important because learners participating in the same institutional program may experience different learning opportunities depending on their attendance, repetition, target completion, and review practices. At the same time, the findings should be considered alongside the observation that high vocabulary coverage does not necessarily guarantee successful comprehension (Hammou, 2024). Taken together, these studies suggest that vocabulary knowledge and participation in vocabulary-learning activities are relevant to reading development, but their benefits depend partly on how lexical knowledge is acquired and applied.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed for improving the muhafazhah mufradat program. First, pesantren administrators and Arabic language teachers should monitor participation consistency, memorization target completion, and review frequency as indicators of learners' engagement in vocabulary learning. Second, regular review activities should be provided to strengthen vocabulary retention and reduce the likelihood of forgetting previously memorized words. Third, memorized vocabulary should be integrated into short phrases, sentences, dialogues, and qira'ah passages to help santri recognize words in meaningful contexts. Fourth, formative assessments should evaluate not only the ability to translate isolated words but also the ability to understand contextual meanings and interpret vocabulary within sentences. Finally, santri with low or moderate participation intensity should receive additional support through small-group review, peer checking, and structured make-up sessions. These recommendations may help align the traditional practice of muhafazhah mufradat more closely with the actual demands of Arabic reading comprehension.

Contextualization of Vocabulary Learning in Arabic Reading Instruction

The findings indicate that the pedagogical value of muhafazhah mufradat can be enhanced when vocabulary memorization is integrated with contextual learning activities. The most productive pattern observed in the instrument responses was not simply repeating a word and its Indonesian meaning, but retrieving the word in a short phrase, sentence, dialogue, or text. In addition, the Mambaus Sholihin language environment provides opportunities for vocabulary to be encountered beyond formal memorization sessions through signs, instructions, classroom discourse, peer interaction, and other language activities. These findings suggest that contextualization and repeated exposure may help learners move from memorizing vocabulary to recognizing and understanding it during Arabic reading.

These findings have implications for the design of Arabic vocabulary instruction in pesantren. Vocabulary memorization should not be treated as an isolated activity that ends when santri successfully recall individual words. Instead, it should be connected to reading exercises and other language-learning activities that require learners to apply vocabulary in meaningful contexts. The pesantren's language environment can also serve as an additional learning resource by providing opportunities for santri to encounter memorized vocabulary in daily communication and educational activities. Consequently, teachers should consider both the quality of vocabulary practice and the opportunities available for learners to use and recognize vocabulary beyond formal sessions.

The potential contribution of contextualization to reading comprehension can be explained through the interaction between repeated exposure, lexical retrieval, and meaningful language use (Rabie-Ahmed & Mohamed, 2022; van den Broek et al., 2022). When santri retrieve memorized vocabulary in phrases and sentences, they encounter not only the meanings of individual words but also their relationships with other words and their functions within grammatical structures. Similarly, repeated encounters with vocabulary through classroom discourse, signs, instructions, and peer interaction may reinforce previously memorized items. These experiences can make vocabulary more accessible when santri encounter the same words in reading passages. Furthermore, incorporating vocabulary into sentences and texts provides

opportunities to recognize morphological and syntactic patterns that cannot always be understood through isolated memorization. Thus, contextualized practice and a language-rich environment may jointly support the transition from memorized vocabulary to functional lexical recognition.

The findings can be interpreted as indicating that vocabulary learning for Arabic reading requires more than the ability to recall word meanings. Santri also need opportunities to recognize vocabulary in different linguistic contexts and understand how its meaning relates to the surrounding text (Aziz et al., 2024). The Mambaus Sholihin language environment may provide conditions that support this process because vocabulary learned during muhafazhah can potentially be reinforced through other language activities. However, the contribution of this environment should be interpreted cautiously: the present findings suggest a plausible explanatory role for contextual exposure but do not independently establish that every encounter with Arabic outside formal sessions improves reading comprehension. The pedagogical significance lies in combining memorization with meaningful application rather than relying exclusively on the frequency of repetition.

The findings are consistent with Alfian et al. (2025), who show that contemporary Arabic vocabulary instruction combines memorization with sentence construction, games, multimodal input, collaboration, and digital resources. This supports the view that vocabulary learning can be strengthened through activities extending beyond the memorization of isolated words. The findings also correspond with Ulum (2020), where vocabulary learning supported more independent interpretation of Arabic texts. Furthermore, Maf'udah et al. (2025) report that Arabic occupies a strong position in the Mambaus Sholihin pesantren's linguistic landscape and bilingual policy. This provides a relevant institutional context for understanding how vocabulary memorized during muhafazhah may be reinforced through everyday language exposure. Taken together, these studies highlight the importance of connecting vocabulary acquisition, contextual application, and the surrounding language environment in Arabic reading instruction.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed for improving muhafazhah mufradat. First, teachers should balance the quantity of vocabulary memorized with opportunities for review and long-term retention. Second, memorized words should be incorporated into short phrases, sentences, dialogues, and qira'ah passages so that santri can practice recognizing vocabulary in context. Third, formative assessments should evaluate contextual meaning, word-family awareness, and the use of vocabulary in sentences rather than focusing exclusively on isolated translation. Fourth, teachers can encourage santri to recognize and use memorized vocabulary in the pesantren's daily language environment. Finally, a practical learning sequence can be organized through the Memorize–Retrieve–Contextualize–Read cycle: santri memorize a limited set of useful words, retrieve them orally or in writing without consulting a list, use them in phrases and sentences that illustrate their morphological and syntactic functions, and then encounter them in short reading passages followed by comprehension questions. The cycle should conclude with review of words that santri have difficulty recognizing in context. This approach preserves the pesantren tradition of muhafazhah while connecting it more directly to the demands of Arabic reading comprehension.

Pedagogical Implications and Contributions to Arabic Language Education

The findings highlight two important contributions to Arabic language education. First, interventions in the muhafazhah mufradat program should consider differences in participation intensity among santri, particularly those with low or moderate participation. Second, the study demonstrates the value of measuring behavioral participation intensity as a factor associated with Arabic reading performance. Rather than focusing exclusively on learners' vocabulary knowledge at a particular point in time, this approach considers their engagement in the learning activities through which that knowledge develops. These findings provide an additional perspective for understanding differences in reading performance among santri participating in the same institutional program.

The findings have practical implications for the management and evaluation of Arabic vocabulary learning programs in pesantren. Teachers and program administrators should consider participation records as a source of pedagogical information, not merely as administrative or disciplinary documentation. Attendance, completion of memorization targets, and review frequency can help identify santri who may require additional support. Furthermore, vocabulary-learning supervision should be responsive to individual participation patterns rather than applying identical measures to all learners. This approach may enable teachers to allocate instructional support more effectively and address potential learning difficulties before the end-of-semester assessment.

Differences in participation intensity may contribute to differences in the learning opportunities available to santri. Learners who frequently miss sessions, fail to complete memorization targets, or rarely review previously learned vocabulary may receive fewer opportunities to retrieve and reinforce lexical knowledge. Over time, these gaps may make vocabulary less accessible during reading and increase the difficulty of understanding Arabic texts. Conversely, consistent participation provides more opportunities for memorization, retrieval, and review, which may support vocabulary retention and recognition. Early identification of participation gaps, followed by small-group review, peer checking, spaced make-up sessions, and differentiated vocabulary targets, may help prevent these gaps from developing into more persistent reading difficulties. Nevertheless, these mechanisms should be understood as plausible explanations of the observed relationship rather than definitive evidence of causation.

The findings suggest that participation intensity can serve as an informative indicator of the learning process underlying Arabic reading development. Its value lies not only in identifying how frequently santri attend vocabulary activities but also in providing insight into their opportunities to engage in repeated learning and review. In a pesantren environment where language-learning routines are highly structured, differences in participation may help explain why learners exposed to the same program achieve different reading outcomes (Nuzula et al., 2025). However, participation intensity should not be treated as the sole determinant of reading performance. Other factors, including grammatical knowledge, reading strategies, prior vocabulary knowledge, and individual learning differences, may also contribute to these outcomes. Therefore, participation data are most useful when interpreted alongside other information about learners' progress and learning needs.

The contribution of this study can be understood in relation to vocabulary research that uses vocabulary test scores as predictors of reading performance. Vocabulary tests provide valuable information about what learners know at a particular point in time. However, they do not necessarily capture how consistently learners participate in the activities through which vocabulary knowledge is developed (Rabie-Ahmed & Mohamed, 2022). By measuring participation intensity, the present study offers a complementary perspective that focuses on learners' engagement in the learning process. This distinction is particularly relevant in pesantren settings, where structured language routines provide opportunities to examine behavioral differences among learners participating in the same program. Thus, the study complements knowledge-based approaches by demonstrating the analytical value of considering participation behavior when investigating differences in Arabic reading performance.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed for the implementation and evaluation of muhafazhah mufradat. First, teachers and program administrators should monitor attendance, memorization target completion, and review frequency to identify santri with low or moderate participation intensity. Second, additional support should be provided according to learners' needs through small-group review, peer checking, spaced make-up sessions, and differentiated vocabulary targets. Third, participation records should be considered alongside formative reading assessments so that teachers can distinguish difficulties associated with limited vocabulary practice from those involving other reading skills. Finally, future research should examine participation intensity alongside other relevant variables, such as vocabulary knowledge, grammatical competence, and reading strategies, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Arabic reading performance. These measures may strengthen the pedagogical application of participation data while extending research on vocabulary learning and reading development in pesantren contexts.

CONCLUSION

This quantitative study demonstrates that the intensity of participating in muhafazhah mufradat activities significantly predicts the maharah al-qira'ah of santri at Mambaus Sholihin Islamic Boarding School. The mean participation-intensity score was 78.34 and the mean reading score was 81.12. The two variables were strongly and positively correlated ($r = 0.684$, $p < 0.001$). Simple linear regression yielded $Y = 35.29 + 0.585X$ and $R^2 = 0.468$, indicating that participation intensity accounted for 46.8% of the variance in Arabic reading performance. The findings support the view that sustained attendance, repetition, achievement of memorization targets, and active retrieval make vocabulary more accessible during reading. However, the unexplained variance confirms that reading proficiency also depends on grammar, morphology, reading strategies, prior knowledge, and other learner factors. Pedagogically, muhafazhah mufradat should be organized as a cumulative and contextual program rather than a short-term recitation routine. Memorized vocabulary should be systematically reviewed, used in phrases and sentences, and recycled in qira'ah texts. The study is limited to one pesantren and one predictor variable; future research

should employ longitudinal or experimental designs and include vocabulary size, nahwu-sharaf mastery, motivation, and reading-strategy use in multivariate models. The results nevertheless show that participation intensity is a meaningful and measurable component of Arabic reading development in a language-rich pesantren environment.

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