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Article

# Beyond Traditional Memorization: The Choir–Maqām–Meaning Model in University-Level Hifz Education

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## Abstract

This study investigates a multidimensional "choir–maqām–meaning" model for Qur'anic memorization (hifz) integrated with formal undergraduate education, analyzed through the lens of Qira'at science and cognitive pedagogy. Departing from traditional individualistic methods, this research evaluates the effectiveness of a collective, melodic approach in sustaining student commitment. Utilizing a mixed-methods design at Kırşehir Ahi Evran University, data from a cohort of 20 students were analyzed through open-ended questionnaires, thematic analysis, and descriptive statistics. Findings indicate that despite the high cognitive and physical demands of dual curricula, the integration of choir and maqām enhances long-term retention and minimizes phonetic errors while maintaining peak motivation through peer support. Crucially, this research serves as a pilot phase for an expansive interdisciplinary project. By establishing a theoretical and practical foundation, it aims to pave the way for subsequent neuroimaging stages utilizing fMRI, DTI, and EEG methodologies to investigate the impacts of this model on neuroplasticity and cognitive reserve. Thus, the study offers a novel perspective on how specialized religious training can contribute to brain-based learning and cognitive development within the higher education ecosystem.

**Keywords:** Qur'anic education; hifz pedagogy; choir–maqām–meaning model; Qira'at sciences; cognitive reserve; fMRI and neuroimaging; religious education

## 1. Introduction

The term *hāfiẓ* (Arabic: الحافظ), derived from the root *ḥifẓ* (الحفظ), lexically denotes "one who protects" or "one who preserves," conceptually referring to an individual who memorizes the Holy Qur'an in its entirety. Beyond its linguistic roots, *Hāfiẓ* is recognized as one of the ninety-nine names of Allah, signifying His role as the ultimate guardian (Ibn Manẓūr 1997). The theological foundation of this practice is rooted in Surah al-Hijr: "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian," highlighting the divine preservation where *hāfiẓs* play a primary role (Qur'an 15:9; Bozkurt 1997). This tradition, initiated by the Prophet Muhammad, who likened *hāfiẓs* to noble scribes (*safarat al-kirām*) (Qur'an 80:15–16), was meticulously maintained by his Companions (al-Bukhārī 2011; Ibn Ḥanbal 2001; al-Dārimī 2000). Historical figures like Uthman b. Affan and Ali b. Abi Talib established the lineage for current *Qirā'āt* recitations (al-Dhahabī 1984; Bozkurt 1997). By the 2nd century (8th century AD), hifz gained immense prestige, as evidenced by large student cohorts under scholars like Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (Muslim n.d.; Ibn Khallikān 1978).

Scholars such as Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429) emphasized that the authentic transmission of the Qur'an relies on oral tradition (*al-naql al-shafahī*) rather than written codices alone (Ibn al-Jazarī n.d.). This tradition evolved into institutional structures like *Dārulhuffāz* and *Dārulqurrās* during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, specializing in the seven and ten *Qirā'āt* (Gökdemir 2019). Islamic scholarship classifies the preservation of the Qur'an through hifz as a collective obligation (*fard al-kifāyah*), ensuring its continuity within Muslim identity (al-Suyūṭī 1974).

In Türkiye, despite periodic challenges during early Republican policies, hifz education has remained continuous through the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). Recent Ministry of National Education (MoNE) regulations enable students to pursue hifz alongside primary and secondary education. However, a significant regulatory and pedagogical gap exists for university-level students (Arslan 2020). To address this, an institutional initiative was launched at Kırşehir Ahi Evran University, supported by the Provincial Mufti's Office, to offer undergraduate students the opportunity to undertake hifz concurrently with their faculty studies.

The program at Kırşehir Ahi Evran University, supervised by the researcher and two instructors, began with a rigorous two-month preparation phase focusing on tashih al-huruf (articulation correction), tajwid (phonetic rules), and shafahi (reading fluency). Given that undergraduate students face greater academic intensity and age-related cognitive challenges compared to younger learners, the program adopted a distinct multidimensional model. Initially, students began memorizing from Surah al-Baqarah to ensure the completion of a substantial, long-form surah even if they discontinued the program. Although 5 out of 15 students in the initial cohort dropped out, 10 continued as the curriculum transitioned to the classical method (the last five pages of each juz).

The core of this pedagogy is the Choir–Maqām–Meaning system. Initially, students memorized pages alongside their meanings. However, after observing that simultaneous meaning-memorization occasionally led to rapid forgetting, the method was refined to prioritize memorizing the page first, followed by its meaning. Furthermore, students are encouraged to develop projects within the scope of the University Student Communities Cooperation and Support Program (ÜNİDES), a national framework in Türkiye aimed at fostering collaboration and providing institutional funding for student-led initiatives.

The program is meticulously scheduled to avoid conflicts with faculty courses. Lessons are recited between 07:00–08:30 or during breaks, while the specific choir–maqām–meaning sessions take place during the midday interval. Intensive study continues in the late afternoons with tutors, and Saturday sessions are conducted online. This structured integration aims to enable students to complete their hifz within 24 months, providing a sustainable model for religious education within a modern higher education ecosystem. The weekly schedule of the program is detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Course Schedule.

Time	Days	Activity
07:30–08:30	Monday to Saturday	Reciting the Lesson
10:00–10:30	Monday to Saturday	Reciting the Lesson
12:00–13:15	Monday to Saturday	Memorization with Choir–Maqām–Meaning
15:00–18:00	Monday to Friday, and Sunday	Lesson Prep & Study

Within Islamic education, hifz is not merely mechanical memorization but a process requiring multidimensional competencies such as cognitive flexibility and spiritual depth. The central problem of this study is how university students manage the intense cognitive load of modern academic life alongside the rigorous demands of hifz. Investigating the intersection of these two domains is essential for both young adult psychology and pedagogical research.

This research also serves as a preliminary study for a larger initiative planned for submission to the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK) under the 3005—Social and Humanities Innovation Grant Program. This upcoming project aims to provide a neuro-pedagogical validation of the choir–maqām–meaning model by utilizing advanced neuroimaging techniques (fMRI, DTI, and EEG) to map brain connectivity and cognitive reserve.

In Türkiye, hāfiẓ began to be officially registered by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) starting in 1975. Since this date, approximately 255,000 people have completed their hifz and received their diplomas. Assuming that there are just as many individuals doing hifz individually or in private foundations, it is estimated that the number of hāfiẓ citizens is well above

this figure (Diyanet 2025). Furthermore, more than 115,000 students currently receive hifz education in 1,792 Qur'an courses across the country and in schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in cooperation with Diyanet (Presidency of Religious Affairs 2024).

As the literature highlights, studies on hifz education generally focus on childhood and adolescence, emphasizing learning strategies, family support, and the effects of the educational environment. These studies reveal that the hifz process is guided by discipline, repetitive reading, focus, and motivation. However, the literature regarding the young adulthood period is quite limited. The fact that university students' cognitive development levels, self-regulation skills, and academic responsibilities differ significantly from those in childhood necessitates a rigorous scientific examination of their hifz experiences. Psychological research indicates that young adulthood consists of critical developmental stages such as intense identity exploration (Yalçın 2024), consolidation of values (Doğan and Cebioğlu 2011), career orientation (Navaneetham and Kanth 2022), and interaction with the social environment (Üzmez and Ayna 2025). Studies on the functions of spirituality and religious values at this stage show that these elements play a significant role in the individual's psychological well-being (Morsünbül 2011), capacity to cope with stress (Akıncı 2005), and development of social belonging (Topuz 2013).

Higher education research traditionally focuses on students' experiences regarding academic load, social interaction, time management, and personal development, showing that intense academic programs significantly affect cognitive and psychological processes. However, studies investigating the experiences of students maintaining hifz within modern university life remain remarkably scarce. Therefore, the current research aims to make an original contribution by situating itself at the intersection of these fields. The fact that the impact of a rigorous process like hifz on students alongside university education has not been sufficiently addressed constitutes a significant gap in the literature. The general aim of this research is to demonstrate that university students can successfully perform hifz by comprehensively addressing the process across its cognitive, emotional, academic, and social dimensions.

In line with this aim, the present study specifically focuses on revealing the impact of the university environment on the hifz process and determining the underlying tendencies of students to undertake this journey during their undergraduate years. Furthermore, it analyzes the multifaceted difficulties encountered in this dual-education process and the corresponding coping strategies developed by students. Additionally, it evaluates the broader effects of hifz education on academic success, study habits, and value orientations, ultimately providing practical implementation suggestions for integrating hifz into a modern higher education framework.

By doing so, the study aims to make an original contribution to the Qirā'āt literature, addressing hifz education not only through quantitative memorization success but also through its holistic relationship with the method (usūl), performance (adā), and recitation tradition of the Qur'an. It points out that hifz education is not an activity exclusive to childhood; with appropriate pedagogical and institutional arrangements, it can be sustainable alongside formal university education. By examining the effects of choir, maqām, and meaning-based practices, the study reveals how collective reading regains functionality in the modern university context alongside samā' (listening), adā (performance), repetition, and fam-i muḥsin (correct oral transmission)—elements to which the science of Qirā'āt historically attributes profound importance. Consequently, the research argues that Qirā'āt science needs re-evaluation in current educational environments, moving beyond technical rules and narration (riwāyah) to include pedagogical transmission processes. The findings are expected to contribute to structuring university-level hifz programs using Qirā'āt-based teaching approaches, building a theoretical and practical bridge between the classical Qirā'āt tradition and contemporary higher education.

In light of this framework, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors motivate students to begin hifz during their undergraduate education?
2. What are the primary challenges in balancing hifz with academic courses, and what strategies are used to overcome them?

3. What is the ideal weekly time distribution (e.g., 50% hifz, 50% academy) for students?
4. What factors prevent students from quitting despite the challenges faced?
5. Are the extracurricular activities organized within the program sufficient for the students?
6. Is the choir–maqām–meaning system more beneficial than the classical individual method from the students’ perspective?
7. Do participants recommend simultaneous hifz and university education to their peers?

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Research Design and Rationale

While existing literature on hifz predominantly focuses on childhood and adolescence, this research addresses a significant gap regarding undergraduate experiences. Specifically, it evaluates the feasibility of the choir–maqām–meaning system designed to be completed within a maximum of 24 months at the university level—a timeframe not yet comprehensively identified in scholarly studies. To contextualize this model, three closely related works are particularly noteworthy. Gülsüm Arslan’s qualitative studies examined the 75-day choir–maqām–meaning method and its applicability alongside formal education (Arslan 2020; Arslan 2025). Furthermore, Gürel and Kaya (2019) described the hifz education system at Marmara University Faculty of Theology, incorporating insights from program coordinators and instructors. Finally, Yıldırım (2022) provided a structured project proposal framework for theology students’ hifz journeys. Beyond these specific examples, scientific research addressing the university-aged demographic remains scarce, rendering the current qualitative research design both unique and necessary.

### 2.2. Participants and Procedure

This qualitative research utilizes a phenomenological approach, employing the semi-structured interview technique. The flexible, multidimensional interview form allowed for in-depth data collection (Şengül and Şimşek 2024). The study group comprised 20 university students actively participating in the choir–maqām–meaning hifz program at Kırşehir Ahi Evran University. Participants were selected using criterion sampling, a purposive sampling method. The primary inclusion criterion was that students must be concurrently pursuing their formal undergraduate education while actively maintaining their hifz studies under the supervision of the Faculty of Theology’s Department of Qur’anic Recitation and Qira’at.

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools

Research data were obtained through a semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire. Necessary data were collected from the 20 participants constituting the study group. The form included questions exploring dimensions such as the students’ reasons for starting hifz alongside university education, time management strategies between hifz and academic courses, instances of considering quitting the process, primary sources of motivation, their opinions on the choir–maqām–meaning system, and the perceived adequacy of extracurricular activities. Additionally, quantitative data regarding the students’ self-reported academic Grade Point Averages (GPAs) and weekly study plans were collected to provide a broader context.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

The content analysis technique was employed to evaluate the obtained qualitative data. The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, main categories were determined according to the research questions and the theoretical framework of the study. Second, the raw data were systematically reviewed to determine which responses aligned with specific sub-themes. In the final stage, the data were organized under these determined sub-themes and transferred to summary tables to calculate response frequencies and ratios. The primary objective of this application was to define the specific

hifz process under investigation and to convey the perceptions and experiences of the students from their own perspectives. Consequently, the findings are presented using the authentic language of the study group, incorporating direct quotations from the participants.

### 2.5. Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in full compliance with the Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive in Türkiye. Prior to data collection, all participants were comprehensively informed about the purpose of the research, and informed consent for voluntary participation was obtained. The identities of the participants were strictly kept confidential, and all data were analyzed using alphanumeric coding. Ethical approval for the study involving human subjects was formally granted by the Kırşehir Ahi Evran University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (Decision Date: January 7, 2026; Decision No: 2026/01/19). Furthermore, official institutional permission for the publication of the research data was obtained from the Deanery of the Faculty of Theology at Kırşehir Ahi Evran University (Date: January 8, 2026; Document No: 842367).

## 3. Results

Under this heading, the interview data are categorized into thematic sub-themes and interpreted. Participants are coded (P1, P2, etc.) to ensure confidentiality. The research sample consists of 20 female students, providing a gender-homogeneous group that focuses specifically on the experiences of female undergraduates. Additionally, the participants' ages at the start of hifz, the types of high schools they graduated from, and their initial Qur'an reading proficiency levels are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Participants' Code, Age, Education, and Qur'an Reading Information.

Code	Gender	Age	High School Type
P1-P3	Female	18–24	Anatolian
P4-P5	Female	19–44	Imam Hatip
P6	Female	21	Anatolian
P7-P8	Female	20–23	Imam Hatip / Vocational
P9	Female	48	Anatolian

The age distribution spans from 18 to 48. While the majority are in the early adulthood stage (18–25), the inclusion of participants aged 44 and 48—representing middle adulthood—indicates that hifz education can be sustained across diverse life stages and reinforces the significance of individual learning differences (Aktu 2016). Regarding educational background, graduates of Imam Hatip High Schools constitute more than two-thirds of the sample. This suggests that a prior religious education facilitates the orientation toward hifz. Notably, 65% of participants initially rated their Qur'an proficiency as "moderate" or lower. Considering that many lacked sufficient tashih al-huruf and tajwid skills upon entry, their successful progression within the faculty's program underscores the effectiveness of the institutional support provided. This shift from moderate initial proficiency to active hifz participation marks a significant pedagogical achievement within the university ecosystem.

### 3.1. Motivations for Initiating Hifz During Undergraduate Studies

To understand the catalysts for undertaking this dual-education process, participants were asked: "What factors led you to start hifz while studying at the faculty?" Selected responses highlight a blend of internal desires and external institutional support:

**P1:** "Honestly, I never had the desire for hifz inside me; my only aim was to read the Qur'an properly by giving it its due, to teach it to people, and to apply it to my life. I wanted to take a step for the sake of Allah, but my daily preoccupations prevented this. As I realized my own success and

with the encouragement of our professors, I started to embrace hifz more and became eager to love it. I decided to proceed on this path because I wanted to develop myself further spiritually.”

**P8:** “After gaining admission to Theology, my devotion to the Qur’an increased significantly. I noticed that my interest also increased, and I decided to become an academician in this field. Along with this, hearing that our faculty had a hifz project and supporting my educational life with hifz were effective in making this decision.”

**P10:** “I wanted it very much before coming to university. When I saw that there was a hifz project in our faculty, I wanted to do hifz as well.”

**P11:** “I wanted to do hifz, but I couldn’t find the courage to start. When some friends at the faculty started, I started too; the goal is to be on this path.”

**P15:** “The fact that I wanted to do hifz before and that such an opportunity is provided in my faculty.”

**P18:** “My 2-year Faculty process had been efficient. However, I still felt a deficiency. When I encountered the hifz project during this process, frankly, I was a bit scared about how both lessons and memorization could be carried out together. But seeing my friends currently studying at our school whose hifz processes are still continuing, I said to myself, ‘Why not?’ Of course, I was strengthened by the support of my professors and friends in this process. Besides, my mother and father—that is, my family—have been my biggest supporters.”

**P20:** “My thought of starting hifz existed during middle school times, but I couldn’t dare. While in the 2nd year of university, with the encouragement of our Qira’at professor, these thoughts were revived and enabled me to walk on this path.”

**Table 3.** Thematic distribution of factors motivating students to initiate hifz.

Sub-theme	Participant	Frequency
Instructor Encouragement and Institutional Guidance	P1, P2, P6, P9, P10, P15, P16, P18, P20	9
Pre-existing Desire for Hifz	P3, P5, P11, P15, P16, P17, P19	7
Spiritual Motivation and Seeking the Pleasure of Allah	P1, P4, P9, P12, P14, P18	6
Opportunity and Institutional Facilities	P2, P3, P5, P8, P12, P14	6
Social Environment and Family Influence	P4, P6, P7, P18	4

Thematic analysis (Table 3) reveals that “Instructor Encouragement and Institutional Guidance” is the primary driver (45%), indicating that initiating hifz at this age is often a relational process rather than a purely individual one. A “Pre-existing Desire” (35%) frequently required the catalyst of institutional facilities or peer support to actualize. Furthermore, spiritual motivations (30%) underpin participants’ commitment, providing an existential foundation that sustains them through the rigorous dual-education process.

### 3.2. Challenges and Coping Strategies in Dual Education

To identify the primary obstacles in balancing academic coursework with the intensive demands of hifz, participants were asked: “What is the biggest challenge you experience, and how do you overcome it?” Their responses highlight time management and academic clashes as central issues:

**P4:** “Sometimes, at the hour I need to consolidate my memorization, it causes clashes with my school lessons, and in this situation, I have difficulty regarding how to determine a priority, and I make a choice and try to manage.”

**P7:** “For me, focus and time management were among the biggest challenges. Regarding time, with my professors’ guidance, I first reduced social media usage and devoted the majority of my day to my memorization and academic courses. As for the focus problem, overcoming it was one of the points I struggled with quite a lot, but I tried the method of doing my memorization in a quiet

environment and realized that this was successful. If you are experiencing a focus problem, you should do your lesson in a quiet place and be the first person to recite the lesson early in the morning.”

**P9:** “The thing we struggle with most is using time well for hifz together with academic courses. We use time well by preparing a regular, planned schedule and developing that schedule or a better one within that framework.”

**P16:** “One of the issues I struggled with most during the hifz and school period is the time problem. I tried to solve this problem by waking up very early in the morning.”

**P17:** “Time and the inability to keep up. Sometimes I feel like I can’t catch up, but when I divide this day by day, even into hours, the problem is solved.”

**Table 4.** Primary challenges in dual education and corresponding coping strategies.

Sub-theme	Participant	Frequency
Solving through time management and planning	P6, P7, P9, P11, P14, P16, P18	7
Managing faculty and hifz courses simultaneously: Solving by focusing on the weaker one	P1, P4, P5, P8, P13, P15, P17, P19, P20	9
Handling hifz courses during exam weeks: Solving by taking a break that week	P2, P3, P10, P12	4

Findings from Table 4 indicate that students predominantly struggle with scheduling conflicts between faculty obligations and memorization tasks (45%). They mitigate these challenges through strategic prioritization, rigorous daily planning, and behavioral adjustments such as reducing social media usage and adopting early morning routines. Furthermore, specific high-stress periods, such as university exam weeks, necessitate a distinct coping mechanism (20%), often involving a temporary suspension of new hifz assignments to manage cognitive load effectively.

### 3.3. Time Distribution and Academic Performance (GPA)

To evaluate the perceived ideal balance between memorization and faculty coursework, and to measure the actual academic impact of this dual commitment, participants were asked: “What is the ideal percentage of time distribution in your weekly study plan, and what is your current GPA?” Selected responses illustrate their time-management priorities and academic outcomes:

**P2:** “60% hifz, 40% academic courses. My GPA: 2.82”

**P3:** “80% hifz, 20% academic courses. My GPA: 2.20”

**P12:** “75% hifz, 25% academic courses. My GPA: 3.37”

**P14:** “70% hifz, 30% academic courses. My GPA: 3.43”

**P19:** “60% hifz, 40% academic courses. My GPA: 3.74”

**Table 5.** Distribution of participants’ Grade Point Averages (GPA) alongside their intensive hifz studies.

Sub-theme	Participant	Frequency
Study focus: 90% Hifz	All participants	20
Study focus: Academic	P5, P8, P19	3
GPA between 3.51 and 4.00 (AA)	P1, P4, P6, P9, P12, P14, P18, P20	8
GPA between 3.01 and 3.50 (BA)	P2, P10, P13, P15, P16	5
GPA between 2.51 and 3.00 (BB)	P3, P7, P11, P17	4
GPA between 2.01 and 2.50 (CB)	P5, P8, P19	3
Average GPA of the participants		2.96

The findings robustly challenge the assumption that rigorous religious memorization inherently detracts from formal academic success. As qualitative responses indicate, students allocate a significant majority of their weekly study plan (typically 60% to 80%) to hifz. Despite this heavy cognitive and temporal investment, the study group maintains a highly commendable average GPA

of 2.96. Notably, more than half of the participants (13 out of 20) achieved a GPA above 3.00. This indicates that the discipline, cognitive flexibility, and focus required for the choir–maqām–meaning hifz model potentially transfer to their academic habits, allowing them to manage dual responsibilities efficiently without compromising their faculty education.

### 3.4. Thoughts on Discontinuation and Factors of Persistence

To understand the psychological resilience of students undertaking this dual workload, participants were asked whether they had considered quitting hifz and what factors motivated them to persist. Their responses reveal a spectrum of internal resolve and external reliance:

**P3:** “I have never thought about quitting hifz until now. Yes, sometimes I struggled a lot, but I never thought of such a thing. Inshallah, I will continue until I finish.”

**P6:** “I haven’t had such a thought until now.”

**P8:** “Yes, I thought about it. However, one of the main factors that caused me to abandon this thought was my intention to finish when I started and my family. Along with these, the encouragement of my professors was also effective.”

**P10:** “There are times when I think about quitting hifz. However, the effort I spent even while memorizing a single verse comes to my mind. It is precisely the thought of not wanting to waste this effort that ensures I continue hifz.”

**P12:** “Yes, I thought about it. However, I motivated myself by thinking that my Lord chose me as a guardian of the Qur’an. I was afraid of regretting it if I quit at the end of the process. Time passes whether I memorize or not. But I continued with the thought that by doing hifz, I am spending my days for my hereafter.”

**P13:** “Yes, there were times I thought about quitting. What caused me to abandon this thought was my family’s and professors’ belief in me. They continuously show this to me both through their behaviors and motivational speeches.”

**Table 6.** Prevalence of the thought of quitting and persistence among participants.

Sub-theme	Participant	Frequency
Never considered discontinuing hifz	P2, P3, P5, P6, P9, P17	6
Considered discontinuing but persevered for various reasons	P4, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P18, P19, P20	14

As shown in Table 6, while 30% of the students never viewed quitting as an option despite the program’s rigors, the majority (70%) mentally considered discontinuing due to university-related stress and the intense cognitive load. Remarkably, however, a 100% continuation rate was maintained. Qualitative data indicates that this persistence was secured through a convergence of spiritual motivation (e.g., viewing oneself as a guardian of the Qur’an), an internal realization of invested effort, and critical social support from family and instructor mentorship. This demonstrates that in a higher education ecosystem, the thought of quitting is a normal psychological phase in hifz education; yet, it remains highly manageable when sustained by a multidimensional support network that fosters goal-oriented resilience rather than relying solely on individual willpower.

### 3.5. Extracurricular Activities and Motivational Support

To assess the impact of the program’s social and motivational initiatives, participants were asked: “We also organize various activities in our hifz program. Are these activities sufficient for you?” Their responses highlight the role of extracurricular engagement in mitigating the dual-education workload:

**P1:** “Speaking for myself, I don’t think I deserve such activities. Because a person should deprive oneself of certain pleasures until obtaining the goal. I think I will deserve it after the achievement. In a way, I don’t like traveling and participating in such activities. I like doing things that benefit people, and I want to withdraw into my inner world and focus on my hifz; trips, etc., are a waste of time for

me. But of course, there is a great effort; praise be to Allah who does not waste these efforts, I will do justice to the efforts of our precious professors by Allah's leave."

**P7:** "The activities seem sufficient."

**P8:** "The activities done in the hifz program affect us positively. These activities could be increased a bit more."

**P11:** "I participate in activities with pleasure. There are guests for weekly motivational speeches. I think increasing these guests would be better. Because I feel truly motivated. The work I do gains even more meaning."

**P12:** "I don't want activities to be held on weekdays. They can be done on weekends, provided it is once a month."

**P18:** "I would like the activities to be increased. City trips especially motivate us. The durations of meetings with guests are ideal. Additionally, visits from individuals who have completed the hifz process, along with psychological support training, could be beneficial. Also, I think tea times where we can chat comfortably among ourselves would increase motivation."

**P19:** "When hifz and academy are simultaneous, I think the difficulty is 2 or maybe 3 times that of the difficulty experienced in just hifz. To overcome this, a different activity can be done every month. Yes, activities are done, but they can be increased."

**P20:** "Every opportunity within their power is offered to us by our university, Alhamdulillah."

**Table 7.** Participants' perceptions regarding the sufficiency of extracurricular activities.

Sub-theme	Participant	Frequency
Yes, sufficient	P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P13, P14, P15	9
Yes, sufficient but could be increased	P2, P6, P8, P11, P16, P17, P18, P19	9
Once a month on weekends	P12	1
No activities requested	P1	1

Analysis of Table 7 reveals a high level of satisfaction with institutional activities, with 90% (18 out of 20) finding them either sufficient or highly beneficial if increased (e.g., guest speakers, city trips, peer chats). These social and motivational events function as crucial psychological support mechanisms, effectively reducing the mental fatigue caused by the intense cognitive load. However, the ascetic preference of one participant (P1)—who views such activities as a distraction from spiritual goals—and the logistical preference of another (P12), suggest that maintaining a flexible, elective structure for these events best accommodates diverse individual learning styles and spiritual orientations within the cohort.

### 3.6. Perceived Efficacy of the Choir–Maqām–Meaning System

To evaluate the core pedagogical intervention of the program, participants were asked: "Is the hifz system with chorus-maqam-meaning more beneficial than the classical individual system? Why?" Their responses illuminate the cognitive advantages, as well as the logistical challenges, of this collective approach:

**P1:** "I think it is more beneficial. Because when collective reading comes together, memory becomes more permanent."

**P2:** "It was very beneficial for me. Because I discovered in myself that since I pick up reading by ear, this situation affected me as follows: it enabled me to memorize the page correctly and read it beautifully. The advantage of reading the meaning was that it was very beneficial for me regarding its application to my life."

**P4:** "With these systems, verses become more memorable and are memorized quickly."

**P8:** "The presence of chorus and meaning was conducive to making the memorization more permanent and done in a faster time. However, I switched to the individual method to progress faster."

**P10:** “Since every student’s memorization capacity is not the same, it is difficult to progress as a group. Therefore, I think the individual system is more beneficial. Because everyone memorizes according to their own learning style.”

**P12:** “When reciting the memorization we made with this system, that way of memorizing comes to the ear. It is as if the memorization flows.”

**P18:** “Chorus-maqam-meaning is actually more beneficial, but it is very difficult to carry it out as a team. Everyone needs to have the same motivation and capacity. One tries to catch up with the other; the one in front waits for the one behind. For this reason, the individual method seems more logical. However, I can say that memorizations made with the chorus are more solid.”

**Table 8.** Participants’ perceptions comparing the collective pedagogical model to classical.

Sub-theme	Participant	Frequency
Those who find the Choir–Maqām–Meaning system more beneficial	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16, P17, P20	14
Those who find the Choir system beneficial but point out certain problems	P8, P10, P18	3
Those who find individual memorization more beneficial	P9, P13, P19	3

As illustrated in Table 8, a significant majority (70%) favors the choir–maqām–meaning system over classical individual methods. Participants cite enhanced long-term retention, auditory memory consolidation (e.g., “the memorization flows”), and the internalization of meaning as primary cognitive benefits. However, the qualitative data also reveals practical limitations: 15% acknowledge the solidity of group memorization but highlight logistical challenges related to synchronized pacing, while another 15% strictly prefer individual study to accommodate personal learning speeds. Overall, while aligning individual capacities in a group setting presents a challenge, the collective model is perceived as highly supportive and cognitively enriching, serving as the pedagogical anchor of this dual-education process.

### 3.7. Peer Recommendation and Overall Evaluation of the Dual-Education Experience

To gauge the overall perceived value and feasibility of the program, participants were asked: “Would you recommend doing hifz alongside formal university education to others? Why?” Their responses provide a realistic, lived assessment of the dual-education burden:

**P1:** “Yes, I would. It is a difficult but very fruitful process. For someone who manages their time well, faculty and hifz definitely do not hinder each other.”

**P2:** “Yes, I recommend it, but first, the person needs to be disciplined. Because since we carry out two areas together, we also develop ourselves mentally; establishing that balance is very important.”

**P4:** “I recommend it even though both are difficult together because, since the mind opens up while doing hifz, you understand the lessons better too.”

**P8:** “Doing hifz alongside university is really harder compared to other hifz. It really takes time to have it in your memory along with school lessons. Along with this, the person needs to make sacrifices in many areas. If the person has the opportunity, it would be easier for them to do their hifz before university. However, if there was no such opportunity before university time, it can be done during university time as well.”

**P9:** “I have some hesitations regarding this. My suggestion is as follows: If the goal is to complete the process within two years, I recommend doing so during the first and second years. The third and fourth years should then be focused on academic studies. Especially in the final year, emphasis needs to be placed on exam studies to start the profession. I think it is difficult to do hifz studies and academic studies together. Therefore, I recommend it for the first two years.”

**P12:** “I do not recommend it. Let them only do hifz because when done with university, hifz does not become the only occupation. Therefore, spirituality is not felt sufficiently. Worldly pursuits are very tiring. It is quite difficult to advance both hifz and faculty at the same time.”

**P16:** “I recommend it. Because no matter how difficult it is, you see Allah’s help. Although both seem very difficult together, it is never something impossible to do. I think my hifz study contributes while studying for academic courses. Therefore, I suggest it.”

**Table 9.** Participants’ willingness to recommend the dual-education hifz process to peers.

Sub-theme	Participant	Frequency
Yes, I recommend it.	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P11, P14, P16, P17, P18, P20.	14
Normally, I do not recommend it; it should be completed before university. However, if no opportunity was found until faculty education, it can be undertaken.	P8, P10, P15, P19.	4
No, I do not recommend it because it is too difficult.	P12, P13.	2

As demonstrated in Table 9, a strong majority (70%) of participants unequivocally recommend undertaking hifz alongside university education. These students often emphasize that the rigorous discipline required actually enhances cognitive capacity and academic comprehension (e.g., “the mind opens up”). However, a significant minority (30%) express valid reservations. Specifically, 20% recommend it conditionally, suggesting that hifz is ideally completed prior to university to avoid divided focus, while 10% explicitly advise against it due to the immense physical toll and perceived spiritual dilution. Ultimately, these findings indicate that while the dual-education model is highly rewarding and achievable for most, it is not universally suitable. Success heavily depends on individual discipline, time management, and academic capacity, underscoring the need for tailored, conditional enrollment rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings of this research reveal that integrating hifz into a modern undergraduate curriculum through the Choir–Maqām–Meaning model creates a profound, multidimensional impact on students. While participants understandably dedicate a substantial portion of their weekly study plans to hifz, their Grade Point Averages (GPA) remain highly competitive. This challenges the traditional assumption that intensive memorization inherently detracts from university education. Instead, it suggests that the cognitive flexibility, discipline, and time management skills cultivated through hifz can parallel and even support academic success, provided that the cognitive load is optimally balanced.

A significant majority of the students recommend this dual-education pathway to their peers, albeit conditionally. The research underscores that individual resilience, rigorous discipline, and a robust institutional support ecosystem (such as faculty mentorship and structured study environments) are critical determinants of sustainability. The instances of hesitation or negative attitudes primarily stem from temporal constraints and the sheer intensity of the process. Strikingly, while 70% of the participants experienced periods of doubt or considered quitting due to this intensity, a 100% continuation rate was achieved. This reveals that the psychological burden of hifz is a natural phase of the learning curve, which becomes fully manageable when fortified by spiritual motivation, peer solidarity, and unwavering instructor support.

Furthermore, the extracurricular activities integrated into the program were found to be vital psychological support mechanisms. While generally deemed sufficient, the demand for more diversified and flexible activities highlights the necessity of an elective, student-centered approach

rather than uniform practices. Such tailored social engagements actively reduce mental fatigue and strengthen the communal bonds necessary for long-term motivation.

At the core of this pedagogical success is the Choir–Maqām–Meaning system, which the vast majority of participants identified as superior to classical, solitary individual study. By facilitating auditory learning, reducing phonetic error rates, and reinforcing long-term retention through semantic connection (meaning), the system effectively modernizes classical Qirā’āt transmission methods (samā’ and adā). However, acknowledging individual differences in learning speeds, this study recommends a hybrid approach: utilizing the collective choir system for initial memorization and motivation, while allowing flexible, individual study phases for pacing.

## 5. Conclusions

Ultimately, this study proves that with appropriate pedagogical and institutional frameworks, hifz is not merely a rote childhood activity but a sustainable, cognitively enriching practice for young adults in higher education. As a foundational qualitative inquiry, the insights obtained here pave the way for broader scientific validation. Specifically, these findings establish the pedagogical groundwork for the upcoming TÜBİTAK 3005-supported neuro-cognitive project, which will utilize advanced imaging techniques (fMRI, DTI, EEG) to map the neural connectivity and cognitive reserve generated by this specific hifz model. Thus, this research not only bridges the classical Qirā’āt tradition with modern university education but also opens a new interdisciplinary frontier in the neuro-pedagogy of Islamic studies.

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