



Dynamics of Growth Mindset among Adolescent Qur'an Memorizers in Islamic Boarding Schools

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*Authors' Contribution: A – Study design; B – Data collection; C – Statistical analysis; D – Manuscript Preparation; E – Funds Collection

ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescent Qur'an memorizers (hafidz) face complex academic, spiritual, and psychological demands while pursuing the target of memorizing 30 juz within an Islamic boarding school environment. **Objective:** This study aimed to explore the dynamics of growth mindset among adolescent Qur'an memorizers in achieving this target and to examine its relation to grit and positive psychology. **Method:** A qualitative phenomenological design was used. Seven adolescents were purposively selected from an initial survey of 39 respondents based on variations in growth mindset level, and data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation, then analyzed thematically. **Results:** The dynamics of growth mindset were categorized into three patterns, namely strong growth mindset, developing growth mindset, and a tendency toward fixed mindset, which were closely related to grit, particularly perseverance of effort and consistency of interest, while meaning in life, optimism, and spiritual values reinforced psychological resilience. **Conclusion:** Growth mindset, grit, and positive psychology are interconnected factors that support adolescent Qur'an memorizers in sustaining long-term memorization goals.

Keywords: Growth mindset, grit, positive psychology, adolescent Qur'an memorizers, 30-juz memorization.

ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Remaja hafidz Al-Qur'an menghadapi tuntutan akademik, spiritual, dan psikologis yang kompleks dalam mencapai target hafalan 30 juz di lingkungan pondok pesantren. **Tujuan:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami dinamika growth mindset pada remaja hafidz Al-Qur'an dalam mencapai target tersebut serta keterkaitannya dengan grit dan psikologi positif. **Metode:** Penelitian menggunakan desain kualitatif fenomenologi. Tujuh remaja dipilih secara purposif dari hasil kuesioner awal terhadap 39 responden berdasarkan variasi tingkat growth mindset, dengan data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam semi-terstruktur, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik. **Hasil:** Dinamika growth mindset terbagi ke dalam tiga kategori, yaitu growth mindset kuat, growth mindset berkembang, dan kecenderungan fixed mindset, yang berkaitan erat dengan grit, khususnya ketekunan usaha dan konsistensi minat, sementara makna hidup, optimisme, dan nilai spiritual memperkuat ketahanan psikologis. **Kesimpulan:** Growth mindset, grit, dan psikologi positif merupakan faktor yang saling terkait dalam mendukung remaja hafidz Al-Qur'an mempertahankan target hafalan jangka panjang.

Kata Kunci: Pola pikir berkembang, ketekunan, psikologi positif, remaja hafidz Al-Qur'an, hafalan 30 juz

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Submitted: 2026-07-28
Accepted: 2026-09-04



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Psychological Measurement

Introduction

Adolescents who memorize the Qur'an (hafidz Qur'an) undergo an educational process with complex demands that span academic, spiritual, and psychological dimensions. Memorizing the Qur'an requires more than cognitive capacity; it demands consistency, discipline, and mental resilience in the face of recurring memorization targets, repeated muroja'ah (review) activities, and routine evaluation by supervisors. It is not a simple act of repetition but an activity that involves perseverance, focus, and the ability to overcome internal and external challenges. Adolescents who memorize the Qur'an while also pursuing formal education often struggle to divide their time between schoolwork and memorization targets, leaving many feeling tired, unfocused, and unmotivated (Hafnidar, 2025). Consistent with this, Putri and Harfiani (2022) reported that students at SMPIT Al-Munadi, Medan, frequently failed to reach their memorization targets because the process demands not only the capacity to remember but also strong emotional, cognitive, and behavioral commitment. The central challenge for adolescent hafidz is completing the memorization of 30 juz consistently, or mutqin, a target that requires mature psychological readiness alongside the cognitive ability to retain the verses of the Qur'an.

Individuals respond differently to these demands depending on how they interpret their own ability and the learning process they undergo. One psychological factor central to this response is growth mindset, the belief that ability and intelligence can be improved through effort, learning, and perseverance rather than being fixed traits (Meng et al., 2025). Dweck (2006) explains that mindset functions as a framework individuals use to interpret their experiences, existing on a continuum between growth mindset and fixed mindset (Nurhidayah et al., 2025); individuals who lean toward growth mindset believe that their potential can continue to develop through facing increasingly complex challenges (Firman, 2026). According to Dweck (2015), individuals with a growth mindset believe that intelligence, talent, and traits are not fixed products of heredity, face challenges with genuine determination, remain focused on the future despite mistakes, hold a positive view of effort, learn from criticism, and draw inspiration from the success of others. Dweck (2015) further identifies four underlying aspects of growth mindset: a belief that intelligence and character can change through effort; a belief that challenges and failure are an important part of self-development; a belief that effort and hard work are central to success; and a belief that criticism and feedback are valuable sources of self-improvement (Credé et al., 2016). Research by Megawanti et al. (2025) shows that adolescents with a growth mindset are better able to face challenges and keep learning, whereas many students who lack this orientation remain withdrawn, reluctant to voice their opinions, and afraid of the shame of failing to achieve their aspirations.

Growth mindset is an important factor in helping adolescent Qur'an memorizers reach the target of 30-juz memorization. Adolescents with a growth mindset tend to view the memorization process as an ability that can be improved through muroja'ah, discipline, self-evaluation, and consistent effort, understanding that memorization does not simply appear or depend on talent alone but develops through practice and perseverance in each memorization submission (setoran). This mindset helps them keep going when facing difficulties such as struggling with certain verses, frequently forgetting memorized material, or falling short of a set target, because they interpret mistakes as part of the learning process rather than evidence of incapacity. Research by Meng et al. (2025) shows that growth mindset is related to improved psychological well-being through the roles of grit and academic self-efficacy, with individuals who hold a growth mindset better able to sustain long-term effort and learning engagement. Conversely, Hafnidar (2025) found that low grit among students who had not reached their memorization target made them more likely to lose consistency and motivation, while Wang et al. (2025) found that growth mindset is positively related to both grit and learning engagement among adolescents.

Success in memorizing the Qur'an is also closely tied to grit, defined as the capacity to remain committed to the same long-term goal despite obstacles or failure (Calo et al., 2024). Duckworth (2017) explains that grit helps a person work hard in facing challenges and maintain effort and interest over the years despite setbacks or a lack of visible progress, and further identifies

passion and perseverance as its two core components (Duckworth, 2018): passion reflects a sustained, undistracted commitment to long-term goals, while perseverance reflects the tendency to keep working on a task even under difficulty (Genia & Sembiring, 2017). On the other hand, the positive psychology approach emphasizes individual strengths such as optimism, meaning in life, and psychological well-being that support individuals in undergoing demanding processes more adaptively; Xu and Wang (2024) found that growth mindset contributes to psychological well-being through increased enthusiasm, indicating that growth mindset is tied not only to cognitive functioning but also to non-cognitive, motivational factors consistent with grit and positive psychology (Meng et al., 2025).

Growth mindset and grit are theoretically interrelated, particularly in helping individuals pursue long-term goals. Individuals who believe that ability can develop through effort tend to be more driven to persist when facing difficulty, and this belief gives rise to the persistent, consistent behavior that forms the core of grit; growth mindset thus functions as the cognitive foundation, while grit is its behavioral manifestation, and together they contribute to psychological well-being as part of positive psychology. A meta-analysis by Lam and Zhou (2025) found a significant positive relationship between growth mindset and grit, in both the perseverance-of-effort and consistency-of-interest dimensions, at a moderate-to-strong level (Ka et al., 2025), and Wang et al. (2025) similarly found that growth mindset increases grit, which in turn mediates improvements in adolescent psychological well-being. A longitudinal study by Zhang et al. (2022) further shows that growth mindset and grit develop dynamically and influence one another over time, jointly contributing to individual resilience.

Preliminary observation in the pesantren environment, supported by an initial questionnaire distributed to 39 adolescent Qur'an memorizers, revealed considerable variation across emotion regulation, self-esteem, psychological well-being, achievement motivation, and growth mindset, with growth mindset showing the highest value among these variables. Even so, a fairly clear gap remained between santri with high and low levels of growth mindset, visible in how they faced difficulty, responded to failure, and maintained motivation during memorization. This suggests that although the pesantren environment has the potential to support the formation of a growth mindset, not all santri develop this mindset optimally, and quantitative scores alone cannot fully capture how growth mindset is formed and develops in the daily life of adolescent Qur'an memorizers.

Research on growth mindset among adolescent Qur'an memorizers remains limited, particularly research examining the psychological dynamics involved in achieving 30-juz memorization; most prior studies have instead focused on the relationship between growth mindset and academic achievement, grit, or psychological well-being in more general educational settings. The novelty of the present study lies in its specific focus on the dynamics of growth mindset among adolescent Qur'an memorizers in achieving the 30-juz memorization target, and in linking this dynamic to grit and positive psychology within the Islamic boarding school environment. This study explores in greater depth the factors that shape the formation of growth mindset in this population, including personal experience during memorization, support within the pesantren environment, and the spiritual values instilled in the santri's daily lives. Using a qualitative approach, this study is expected to provide a deeper picture of the subjective experience, way of thinking, and process through which adolescent Qur'an memorizers maintain spirit and self-belief in pursuing the target of 30-juz memorization.

Material and Method

Participants

Participants in this study were selected from 39 adolescent Qur'an memorizers at an Islamic boarding school who completed an initial growth mindset questionnaire. Seven participants were then purposively selected to represent variation in growth mindset level: three participants with a high growth mindset (AT, score 195; LN, score 180; MA, score 177), three with a low growth mindset (NA, score 131; FA, score 133; BP, score 140), and one with a moderate growth mindset (YP, score 168) included as a comparison. This selection was intended to provide a comprehensive picture of

growth mindset dynamics across high, moderate, and low levels. All participants were students concurrently pursuing formal junior or senior high school education while memorizing the Qur'an within the pesantren. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the seven participants.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Research Participants

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Grade	Score
1.	AT	Male	14 years	Grade 8 (Jr. High)	195
2.	LN	Female	15 years	Grade 9 (Jr. High)	180
3.	MA	Female	17 years	Grade 11 (Sr. High)	177
4.	NA	Female	15 years	Grade 9 (Jr. High)	131
5.	FA	Female	14 years	Grade 8 (Jr. High)	133
6.	BP	Female	16 years	Grade 10 (Sr. High)	140
7.	YP	Male	15 years	Grade 9 (Jr. High)	168

Procedure

The study began with the distribution of an initial questionnaire to 39 adolescent Qur'an memorizers to map variation in growth mindset level. Based on the questionnaire results, seven participants were purposively selected to represent high, moderate, and low growth mindset levels. Each selected participant then took part in an in-depth semi-structured interview exploring their subjective experience of the memorization process, their responses to difficulty and failure, and the role of the pesantren environment and spiritual values in shaping their mindset. Interviews were complemented by direct observation of participants' daily memorization routines and by documentation of relevant records within the pesantren. All participants and their guardians provided informed consent prior to data collection, and confidentiality was maintained by presenting participants using initials only throughout the study.

Data Collection

Data were collected using method triangulation to increase the validity of the findings, comprising in-depth semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and field documentation (Bainudin, 2026). Triangulation combined multiple sources, methods, and theoretical perspectives to test the consistency of the data obtained (Annasthasya et al., 2025). Interviews were guided by open-ended questions concerning participants' experiences of difficulty, failure, motivation, and the meaning they attributed to the memorization process, while observation and documentation provided contextual and behavioral data to corroborate participants' accounts.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis within a phenomenological framework, chosen for its flexibility in identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within participants' subjective experience (Susandi et al., 2025). This method allowed the researchers to integrate

empirical interview data with the theoretical concepts of growth mindset, grit, and positive psychology, generating thematic categories that describe the dynamics of growth mindset among the participants.

Result

Analysis of the interview data showed that the dynamics of growth mindset among adolescent Qur'an memorizers formed distinct thematic patterns across participants. Participants were grouped into three main categories: (1) participants with a strong growth mindset, (2) participants with a developing growth mindset, and (3) participants with a tendency toward fixed mindset.

Strong Growth Mindset

A strong growth mindset was identified in participants AT, MA, and YP. These three participants believed that memorization ability could develop through effort, practice, and patience, and interpreted difficulty as part of the learning process rather than a permanent obstacle. This was reflected in their responses when asked about difficulties in memorizing:

"If I make a mistake, I just repeat it again — it means I haven't practiced enough. So I need to do muroja'ah more often so the memorization becomes stronger." (AT)

"In my opinion, not being able to do something yet doesn't mean I'm incapable — maybe it's just my method that needs improving." (MA)

"When memorizing gets hard, I consider it a test. So I keep going, slowly but surely I'll manage." (YP)

These statements reflect a process- and effort-oriented outlook, and were accompanied by an adaptive response to failure, in which participants treated mistakes as material for self-evaluation rather than as proof of limitation.

Developing Growth Mindset

Participants LN, NA, and FA showed a growth mindset that was still developing. These participants displayed an emerging tendency toward developmental thinking, but it was not yet consistent and remained influenced by doubt about their own ability:

"Sometimes I feel like I can do it if I try, but if I keep failing, I start thinking maybe I really can't." (LN)

"When things get hard, I usually need to be encouraged first before I can continue." (NA)

"I believe I can do it, but sometimes when I'm tired I get lazy and it feels heavy." (FA)

These statements show fluctuation between growth-oriented and fixed-oriented thinking within the same individual, with environmental support and learning experience emerging as important factors in strengthening the developing mindset.

Tendency toward Fixed Mindset

Participant BP showed a tendency toward fixed mindset, viewing memorization ability as fixed and largely determined by talent:

"I feel like my memorization was never really strong from the start, so even if I repeat it, it's still difficult." (BP)

"When it gets hard, I usually just stop, because it's useless to force it anyway." (BP)

These statements reflect a tendency to avoid challenges and give up easily when facing difficulty, consistent with the characterization of fixed mindset as regarding failure as proof of limited, unchangeable ability.

Growth Mindset and Grit

Growth mindset was also found to be closely related to grit, particularly in the aspects of perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. Participants with a strong growth mindset (AT, MA, YP) displayed high perseverance in facing difficulty:

"Even though I'm tired, I keep going, because if I stop, I'll forget even more." (AT)

"I keep maintaining my memorization even if it's just a little, the important thing is to stay consistent (istiqomah)." (MA)

Among participants with a developing mindset (LN, NA, FA), perseverance remained influenced by emotional and situational conditions:

"When I'm really tired, sometimes I just stop for a while." (FA)

For participant BP, low growth mindset corresponded with low grit:

"When it gets hard, I usually don't continue right away." (BP)

The Role of Positive Psychology

For participants with a strong growth mindset, the activity of memorizing was interpreted as an act of worship and a source of blessing:

"Memorizing isn't just a task, it's worship, so it has to be carried out with patience." (YP)

"If the intention is for the sake of Allah, then it feels stronger even when I'm tired." (AT)

In contrast, this sense of meaning had not yet been strongly formed among participants with a lower growth mindset:

"Sometimes it feels really heavy and becomes a burden." (BP)

Discussion

The findings indicate that growth mindset among adolescent Qur'an memorizers is not a uniform trait but a dynamic pattern that varies by individual, consistent with Dweck's (2007, as cited in Nurhidayah et al., 2025) view that mindset is not fixed but shifts according to experience and context. Participants with a strong growth mindset (AT, MA, YP) consistently framed difficulty as a signal for greater effort rather than a marker of incapacity, aligning with Dweck's (2015) characterization of growth-oriented individuals as those who face challenges with determination, remain focused on the future despite mistakes, and learn from setbacks. The developing-mindset group (LN, NA, FA), by contrast, illustrates that growth mindset can coexist with residual self-doubt, echoing Dweck's argument that mindset operates along a continuum rather than as a binary trait; for these participants, environmental support functioned as an external buffer that helped stabilize an otherwise fluctuating self-belief. Participant BP's tendency toward fixed mindset, marked by

attributing memorization difficulty to an unchangeable, talent-based limitation, mirrors Dweck's (2015) description of fixed-mindset individuals as prone to interpreting failure as evidence of a ceiling on their ability, with a corresponding decline in motivation to keep trying (Genia & Sembiring, 2017).

The close relationship observed between growth mindset and grit among the strong-mindset participants supports Duckworth's (2017) argument that individuals with high grit sustain effort and enthusiasm over the long term despite repeated setbacks, and is consistent with meta-analytic evidence of a moderate-to-strong positive relationship between growth mindset and grit across both perseverance of effort and consistency of interest (Lam & Zhou, 2025, as cited in Ka et al., 2025). The pattern in which lower growth mindset corresponded with lower grit, as seen in participant BP, reinforces Hafnidar's (2025) finding that low grit among students who fail to reach memorization targets is associated with a greater tendency to lose consistency and motivation. Taken together with the findings of Wang et al. (2025) and Zhang et al. (2022), the present results support the view that growth mindset functions as a cognitive foundation from which grit develops as a behavioral manifestation, with the two constructs reinforcing one another dynamically over the course of a long-term endeavor such as memorizing 30 juz.

The role of positive psychology in this study, particularly the meaning participants attributed to memorization as an act of worship, is consistent with research showing that growth mindset contributes to psychological well-being through increased motivation and enthusiasm (Meng et al., 2025; Xu & Wang, 2024). Participants who framed memorization in religious terms appeared better able to sustain effort under fatigue, which aligns with Van Tongeren et al.'s (2022) finding that a strong sense of meaning in life is associated with greater resilience and better stress management, as well as with Datu et al.'s (2022) finding that the combination of grit with optimism and meaning in life contributes significantly to sustained engagement and well-being. In the context of this study, spiritual meaning appears to function as an intrinsic motivational resource that reinforces both growth mindset and grit, helping explain why participants who framed their memorization as worship showed greater psychological resilience than participant BP, for whom the process remained primarily a burden.

These findings also extend prior work by Chen et al. (2026) on the relationship between growth mindset and academic resilience by situating this relationship within a religious educational context. Whereas earlier studies have largely examined growth mindset in relation to academic achievement or general well-being (Meng et al., 2025), this study shows that the same psychological mechanism operates in a distinctly spiritual, long-term learning task, where success is measured not by test scores but by the sustained, cumulative mastery of 30 juz over years of practice. The support of ustadz, peers, and the disciplined culture of the pesantren emerged as an environmental factor that appeared to help participants in the developing-mindset group move toward a stronger, more consistent growth orientation, suggesting that the pesantren environment can be leveraged more deliberately as a site for cultivating growth mindset rather than assuming it develops automatically from immersion in a memorization program.

Conclusion

Conclusion: This study shows that growth mindset is a psychological factor that plays an important role in how adolescent Qur'an memorizers navigate the complex, long-term process of memorizing the Qur'an. Growth mindset dynamics among the participants were categorized into three patterns: strong growth mindset, developing growth mindset, and a tendency toward fixed mindset, and were closely tied to grit, particularly perseverance of effort and consistency of interest, as well as to positive psychological factors such as meaning in life, optimism, and spiritual values that reinforced participants' psychological resilience throughout the memorization process.

Implications: Theoretically, these findings extend growth mindset theory into a religious educational setting, showing that the growth mindset-grit relationship documented in academic contexts also operates in long-term spiritual learning tasks. Practically, the findings suggest that pesantren administrators and ustadz can support santri by explicitly framing memorization setbacks as part of a learnable process, strengthening peer and mentor support for santri whose growth mindset is still developing, and cultivating the spiritual meaning of memorization as a resource for sustaining motivation.

Limitations: This study is limited by its small, purposively selected sample of seven participants from a single pesantren, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other Islamic boarding school contexts. As a cross-sectional qualitative study, it also captures participants' growth mindset dynamics at a single point in time rather than tracking how these dynamics change over the course of the memorization journey.

Future Research: Future studies could employ a longitudinal design to trace how growth mindset and grit develop over the course of memorizing 30 juz, involve a larger and more diverse sample across multiple pesantren, and complement qualitative findings with quantitative measures to test the strength of the relationships identified in this study.

Author Contribution Statement

Salsabila Nurmala Sofa (SNS): Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft.

Diana Rahmasari (DR): Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing, Funds Collection.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank all the participants who agreed to take part in this study, as well as the ustadz and staff of the Islamic boarding school who supported the data collection process.

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