

# Representing Rumah Tahfidz in strengthening of socio-political agenda in contemporary Indonesia: Motive, contestation, and perception

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This article seeks to address several pertinent inquiries: What are the motivations behind the establishment of Tahfidz Houses within urban communities? Why does the presence of these institutions provoke contestation in public discourse? What are the implications of their existence for social life in contexts that already possess an indigenous Islamic culture?

**Method** – To explore these questions, the article focuses on four Tahfidz Houses located in Yogyakarta as the primary subjects of investigation. Employing a phenomenological approach to the study of religion, this research identifies various motivations for the establishment of Tahfidz Houses, including theological, social, economic, and political factors.

**Results** – The findings of this research delineate three primary components: motivations, contestation, and perceptions associated with the establishment of Rumah Tahfidz. The motives encompass theological, social, economic, and political dimensions. Contestation arises in relation to issues of legitimacy, funding, and religious reductionism, which serve to distinguish Rumah Tahfidz from pesantren. Furthermore, Rumah Tahfidz function within both formal and informal structures, thereby contributing to the emergence of a new subculture that embodies the formalization of Sharia and the commodification of religion in urban society.

**Implication** – Rumah Tahfidz has developed as a novel approach to religious education, providing urban communities with a means to combine Quranic instruction with modern societal requirements. However, these institutions still encounter difficulties related to resource availability and the acknowledgment of their religious legitimacy.

**Originality/Value** – This research indicates that Rumah Tahfidz serves as an alternative model for Quranic education, arising in response to the demand for more adaptable religious institutions within urban communities, in contrast to conventional pesantren.

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**Kata kunci:**

Rumah Tahfid,  
Agenda Sosial-Politik,  
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**Abstrak**

**Tujuan** - Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjawab beberapa pertanyaan terkait: Apa motivasi di balik pendirian Rumah Tahfidz di tengah masyarakat perkotaan? Mengapa kehadiran lembaga-lembaga ini memancing kontestasi dalam wacana publik? Apa implikasi dari keberadaan mereka terhadap kehidupan sosial dalam konteks yang telah memiliki budaya Islam asli?

**Metode** - Untuk mengeksplorasi pertanyaan-pertanyaan tersebut, artikel ini berfokus pada empat Rumah Tahfidz yang berlokasi di Yogyakarta sebagai subjek utama penelitian. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi terhadap studi agama, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi berbagai motivasi pendirian Rumah Tahfidz, termasuk faktor teologis, sosial, ekonomi, dan politik.

**Hasil** - Temuan penelitian ini menggambarkan tiga komponen utama: motivasi, kontestasi, dan persepsi yang terkait dengan pendirian Rumah Tahfidz. Motivasi mencakup dimensi teologis, sosial, ekonomi, dan politik. Kontestasi muncul dalam kaitannya dengan isu-isu legitimasi, pendanaan, dan reduksionisme agama, yang menjadi pembeda antara Rumah Tahfidz dengan pesantren. Selanjutnya, Rumah Tahfidz berfungsi dalam struktur formal dan informal, sehingga berkontribusi pada munculnya subkultur baru yang mewujudkan formalisasi Syariah dan komodifikasi agama di masyarakat perkotaan.

**Implikasi** - Rumah Tahfidz telah berkembang sebagai pendekatan baru dalam pendidikan agama, menyediakan sarana bagi masyarakat perkotaan untuk menggabungkan pengajaran Alquran dengan kebutuhan masyarakat modern. Namun, lembaga-lembaga ini masih menghadapi kesulitan terkait ketersediaan sumber daya dan pengakuan atas legitimasi agama mereka.

**Orisinalitas/Nilai** - Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Rumah Tahfidz berfungsi sebagai model alternatif untuk pendidikan Alquran, yang muncul sebagai tanggapan terhadap permintaan akan lembaga keagamaan yang lebih mudah beradaptasi di masyarakat perkotaan, berbeda dengan pesantren konvensional.

## **Introduction**

The establishment of Tahfidz Houses in Indonesia signifies a significant transformation in the domain of Islamic education, providing a contemporary and adaptable alternative to traditional pesantren, particularly within urban contexts (Izudin, 2021; Magfirah, 2020). As of 2020, there were 1,200 Tahfidz Houses officially registered with the Rumah Tahfidz Center, not accounting for those beyond the oversight of PPPA Darul Qur'an agenda DAQU (Rumah Tahfidz Center, 2022; Sasongko, 2020). The emergence of these institutions has initiated discourse regarding the relationship between Indonesia's pesantren-based educational traditions and the integration of modern values (Sofyan, 2015). Tahfidz Houses effectively merge modernity with religious instruction, rendering them attractive to younger demographics and establishing them as pivotal centers for Qur'anic education (Anam et al., 2019; Fahrudin, 2020). Furthermore, in addition to their educational functions, Tahfidz Houses act as protective environments, safeguarding residents from detrimental influences, such as adverse social interactions and conflicting ideologies, while promoting a sense of community akin to familial bonds (Malik, 2023). This communal dimension enhances their appeal, fostering networks of mutual support among residents. The proliferation of Tahfidz Houses poses a challenge to the traditional preeminence of pesantren by responding to urban demands for accessible religious education, thereby influencing contemporary Islamic studies and contributing to the evolution of new narratives within Indonesia's socio-political discourse.

To date, research on Tahfidz Houses, which are integral to the movement of religious formalization, has primarily concentrated on the validity of their curricula. Consequently, these institutions have been approached with caution as educational entities. Previous studies have largely neglected the influence of modernity and the competition with traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, such as pesantren. In this context, two distinct patterns emerge. The first pattern encompasses studies that emphasize the religious dimensions associated with the establishment of Tahfidz Houses (Ariyanti et al., 2021; Diana et al., 2020; Hakim & Dyah Permatasari, 2020; Paulina et al., 2021; Ramadhan et al., 2019). These studies posit that Tahfidz Houses serve to enhance the religious experience for both participants and the surrounding community. Conversely, other research indicates that these institutions may potentially distort the understanding of Qur'anic memorization practices (Magfirah, 2020; Zulaili, 2018). The second pattern includes studies that characterize Tahfidz Houses as alternative religious learning institutions within the modern context, integrating elements of modernity such as organizational management, digital technologies, cyberspace, and pedagogical innovations (Ahmad Sabri, 2020; Basyit, 2019; Husaini, 2021; Latifah et al., 2021; Mulyana et al., 2022). Although Tahfidz Houses have a great concern of scholarly work, there are from diverse perspective to strength the religious experiences and modernity integration into learning process in Islamic education. In addition, there are a limitation in the comprehensive exploration of how the interplay between tradition and modernity impacts the continuity of pesantren within the broader context of social transformation. Building upon these research trajectories, this study aims to an investigate of the global Islamic movement and to analyse their interactions with Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia.

This article aims to enhance the existing body of research by analyzing the phenomenon of Tahfidz Houses in Indonesia, focusing on both institutional management and the formalization of

the religious movement. The study is structured around three primary objectives: (i) to examine the processes and motivations associated with Qur'anic learning within these institutions; (ii) to identify the factors and challenges encountered in the establishment of Qur'anic study institutions; and (iii) to assess the implications of Tahfidz Houses for the learning environment in Indonesia. These objectives seek to investigate Tahfidz Houses as an alternative educational model to traditional Islamic institutions, such as pesantren. Consequently, the article is underpinned by three key pieces of evidence: the motives, contestations, and influences of Tahfidz Houses in the contemporary context.

This research is predicated on the premise that Tahfidz Houses serve not only as an alternative method for Qur'anic education but also as a response to the religious movements occurring in Indonesia. Furthermore, the paper may identify a gap in existing literature regarding the patterns of Quranic studies, as well as the implications for social change that affect the dynamics of religious and political agendas in Indonesia. Conversely, the educational function within society encompasses underlying motives and messages that may result in distortions (Spring, 2002). In light of their role in facilitating social change, Tahfidz Houses are incorporated into the educational landscape to broaden their influence in Qur'anic studies, thereby extending their impact into the socio-political realm within Indonesian society.

#### *Exploring the Dynamics issues on Pesantren and Tahfidz Houses*

The modernization of pesantren represents a movement aimed at integrating traditional Islamic education with the demands and challenges posed by contemporary society (Basyit, 2019). This initiative has arisen as a response from certain communities to navigate the transformations in social and religious contexts brought about by globalization (Magfirah, 2020; Muhsin et al., 2019). The impact of globalization plays a crucial role in the modernization of pesantren, as it facilitates the amalgamation of modern Western practices with traditional pesantren customs (Fauzi, 2012). In the Indonesian context, the modernization of pesantren can be traced back to the colonial era, specifically in response to the introduction of secular education by the Dutch, which prompted efforts to counterbalance the influence of such education. Following the establishment of modern educational institutions in Indonesia, pesantren began to adopt contemporary educational systems within their curricula, operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Zulfikri, 2017). This modernization extends to teaching methodologies and the administrative management of pesantren (Solichin, 2011). While the modernization of pesantren has yielded several positive outcomes, it has also resulted in adverse effects, particularly concerning the identity and fundamental functions of these educational institutions (Bashori, 2017).

This research delineates four distinct approaches to the modernization of pesantren: salaf-modern, salaf-inclusive, salaf-modern-inclusive, and salaf-renewed learning methodologies (Lesmana et al., 2020). The salaf-modern pesantren incorporate traditional practices and adapt them into formal educational frameworks. Conversely, salaf-inclusive pesantren maintain traditional customs, such as the study of the yellow book, sorogan, and bandongan (Rahman, 2020). The third approach represents a synthesis of traditional and modern elements, while the fourth, salaf-renewed learning method, facilitates the instruction of classical Islamic texts through an integrated educational system alongside formal schooling. The evolution of pesantren

modernization has progressed over time, resulting in the establishment of Tahfidz houses, which are influenced by the motivations and objectives underlying the creation of these pesantren (Shulhan, 2021).

Tahfidz House is a Quranic educational institution that employs residential settings as venues for its Qur'an memorization programs, integrating specific methodologies and incorporating characteristics of pesantren in its pedagogical approach (Basyit, 2019). The establishment of Tahfidz Houses is a response to the community's demand for Quranic educational services (Nurkhaeriyah., 2019). In urban contexts, families often prefer Rumah Tahfidz as a Quranic educational institution for their children due to its perceived effectiveness (Khusniyah, 2014). The programs provided by Tahfidz House are diverse and encompass Islamic character education, including teachings on tawhid, fiqh, and ethics (Hakim & Dyah Permatasari, 2020) (Ahmad Sabri, 2020). The primary focus of Rumah Tahfidz is on education that is responsive to community needs, which allows for adaptability in the development of the educational system and curriculum. Furthermore, the operational aspects of the educational services are not confined to a fixed location, enabling the implementation of mobile educational services (Magfirah, 2020; Ramadhan et al., 2019).

The concept of "Movable Religious Services" pertains to religious practices that are conducted in a flexible or non-static manner (Faloye & Ajayi, 2022) (Loyevskaya, 2019). This phenomenon is particularly evident among individuals who emphasize the comprehension and execution of religious rituals over the specific geographical location of these practices (Haeri, 2020). Such individuals contend that contemporary tools, particularly digital technologies and platforms like YouTube, can effectively facilitate or even supplant the necessity for traditional physical places of worship. Historically, this notion was first employed by the Christian community in the 16th century CE to offer religious services to those unable to attend regular gatherings for various reasons (Salokorpi, 1972). Additionally, this practice is noted among Shia Muslims, who refer to their prayer customs as "movable mosques", grounded in the belief that divine worship can occur in any location.

The modernization of pesantren in Indonesia has been necessitated by the imperative to adapt to the evolving social and religious landscapes influenced by globalization. This adaptation has led to the amalgamation of contemporary Western practices with traditional pesantren customs, resulting in the emergence of four distinct modalities of pesantren modernization. Tahfidz houses represent an alternative approach to conventional Qur'anic education, functioning as flexible and mobile educational institutions that utilize residential spaces for learning. These institutions offer programs that encompass Islamic character education. The trend of mobile religious services, particularly evident within Christian and Shia Muslim communities, challenges the notion of fixed places of worship. This movement employs modern technologies, such as digital tools, to facilitate religious rituals, thereby fostering a new religious movement that resonates with the ideological frameworks of the participants and advocates of mobile pesantren. As a religious symbol, the essence of mobile religious services must reflect the foundational principles of pesantren. To gain a comprehensive understanding of this emerging phenomenon and to ensure its alignment with its foundational constructs, empirical investigation and analysis are essential.

## Research Method

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The research focuses on four Tahfidz institutions in Yogyakarta: SahabatQu, Jogokariyan, Tataba Fatiha Karima, and Tasnim Darussalam. These sites were intentionally selected based on two primary criteria. Firstly, the Tahfidz institutions implement a learning process that adheres to the pesantren curriculum, which is a significant consideration. This framework aims to examine the contributions of pesantren to the development of nations in the contemporary era. Secondly, these Tahfidz houses serve as research sites to investigate the motivations of the founding figures behind the establishment of pesantren. This aspect is deemed essential in selecting the study's objectives, as these institutions were founded with educational purposes in mind.

The article employed a qualitative methodology to gather data regarding the motivations, contestations, and interpretations of pesantren in the management of Tahfidz houses. This study adopted a phenomenological approach to religion, as articulated by Cudjoe (2023), to facilitate an understanding of individual activities within the context of local communities. Three categories have been applied to understanding of Tahfidz Houses in keeping the religious tradition and creating a new space of Islamic educational contribution in contemporary pesantren—history, eidetic, and practical perception (Izudin et al., 2024). This methodology employs a socio-historical framework to emphasize the experiences of informants in the learning process, particularly in relation to the memorization and recitation of the Qur'an. Historical awareness facilitates an exploration of the factors that contribute to the establishment of Tahfidz Houses, while the eidetic dimension enables the managers of these institutions to interpret religious traditions and derive new meanings within the contemporary societal context. Consequently, practical awareness plays a crucial role in enhancing the sustainability of practical learning in Quranic studies, positioning Tahfidz Houses as agents of social transformation.

Utilizing a phenomenological framework (Gilliand, 2021; Jang, 2011), the researchers investigated the experiences of participants who acts as informants in the study, with particular emphasis on the practices of Ustadz in the establishment of pesantren, with the objective of examining the dynamics of religiosity. The phenomenology of religion is particularly well-suited for describing new religious movements, as it is crucial for addressing global issues related to contemporary transnational phenomena. The researchers provided a description, analysis, and adaptation of a new socio-religious context through the development of Tahfiz houses.

Data collection was conducted through a three-step process: observation, interviews, and documentation. Initially, researchers utilized observation to gain a comprehensive understanding of the actual conditions surrounding the research subject. During the interview sessions, researchers focused on capturing participants' attitudes, behaviors, and experiences, which were integral to articulating their arguments. This approach allowed for an analysis of participants' body language, their interactions with society, and the underlying motivations for the development of the Tahfidz house. The activities commenced with the careful selection of participants and continued until the completion of data collection in the field study. Researchers maintained field notes throughout the observation process to assist in the preparation of research reports. This study aimed to enhance the understanding of the establishment of the Tahfidz house in relation to its form, motivations, and variations within contemporary religious movements in Indonesia. The

observations facilitated researchers' interpretations of social phenomena pertinent to the study's objectives.

Furthermore, the researchers employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants for interviews. The interviews were conducted with individuals chosen from four Tahfidz Houses located in Yogyakarta: SahabatQu, Jogokariyan, Tataba Fatiha Karima, and Tasnim Darussalam. To ensure adequate representation, a total of ten participants were interviewed, with two individuals from each Quranic studies institution (see Table 1). The interview data were collected based on a structured set of questions addressing four primary topics: (i) the motivations behind the establishment of the Tahfidz House; (ii) the management model employed; (iii) the extent to which the presence of Tahfidz Houses incites debate within the context of Islamic boarding school development; and (iv) the founders' understanding and interpretation of the concept of Islamic boarding schools. The interviews were conducted in an open format, allowing participants to provide comprehensive and nuanced information. Each interview session lasted between 30 minutes to one hour and took place from October to November 2022. The entire interview process was recorded using a tape recorder, and the recordings were subsequently transcribed by two research assistants. The researchers adhered to a code of research ethics to ensure the confidentiality of participant data and to mitigate any potential conflicts of interest.

**Table 1. Statistical table of interviews**

Code	Sex	Age	Interview date	Interview duration (min)	Interview location
I1	Male	40	2022/09/17	35	Homes
I2	Male	32	2022/09/18	50	Homes
I3	Male	45	2022/09/19	60	Homes
I4	Male	52	2022/09/20	40	Homes
I5	Female	56	2022/10/12	25	Village Office
I6	Male	58	2022/10/13	75	Pesantren
I7	Male	42	2022/10/14	120	OEV Office
I8	Female	45	2022/11/21	90	Village Office
I9	Female	38	2022/11/22	40	Village Office
I10	Male	50	2022/11/21	60	OEV Office

Finally, the researchers gathered data through a documentation process to substantiate their interpretations of the phenomena under investigation. They utilized a variety of document types, including international journals, books, policy briefs, profiles of pesantren, biographies of Ustadz, and other relevant sources pertaining to the current research topic.

The data analysis process commenced with an earlier study, distinguishing it from the quantitative methodology, which typically positions analysis as the final stage in research report writing. The researchers employed a phenomenological approach, guided by Creswell & Poth's (2017) framework, to conduct data analysis through five distinct phases. Initially, interviews were recorded using a tape recorder, and these recordings were subsequently transcribed as part of the data processing phase. This stage involved organizing the files on a Personal Computer (PC). Following the creation of a verbatim draft, the researchers proceeded to the horizontalization process, which entailed selecting, condensing, and cataloging direct quotes in accordance with a tabular data analysis format. In the third phase, the horizontalized data was organized into a table that delineated direct meanings corresponding to individual quotes, a process referred to as clustering meanings. The fourth phase involved interpreting the data for each condensed quote,

which facilitated a deeper understanding of the study's objectives, particularly regarding the motivations, contestations, and implications surrounding the establishment of Tahfidz houses.

In sum, the researchers compiled a comprehensive research report and prepared a draft for submission to an international journal. To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation of sources was employed, particularly when the researchers encountered uncertainties regarding the data. This validation process included re-confirming information with participants involved in the study. As a concluding step in the data analysis, the researchers consistently compared other sources to assess the extent to which participants' expressions during interviews were corroborated by evidence, including observations and documents.

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## Results and Discussions

This research illustrates three main categories that can be seen as findings resume, concerning analytical data based on phenomenological approach. The researchers focus on motives, contestation, and perception in building Tahfidz Houses in Yogyakarta.

### *The motives behind establishing Tahfidz Houses*

The analysis of four case studies—SahabatQu, Jogokariyan, Tataba Fatiha Karima, and Tasnim Darussalam—reveals that each institution has pursued distinct motivations in establishing their respective programs. The researchers have identified three primary categories of motivation: theological, social, economic, and political (see [Table 1](#)). Firstly, the theological motivations underscore the role of Tahfidz houses as alternative avenues for imparting religious values, encompassing both belief and submission. Students are required to document their daily activities in a written format known as *lailatul hisab* (the night of reckoning for good and bad deeds). Furthermore, the learning process is mandated for the management of these institutions, serving as a guide for exemplary living practices. Secondly, the social motivations stem from the founders' personal commitment to social responsibility. They have established Tahfidz houses in response to social issues prevalent in urban areas, where many children are vulnerable to social pathologies such as theft, poverty, and delinquency. The establishment of Tahfidz houses is thus positioned as a traditional educational framework for Quranic learning. Thirdly, economic motivations are evident in the operationalization of Tahfidz houses as business ventures, including the establishment of various brands in different locales, as well as engaging in entrepreneurial activities such as fresh water distribution and restaurant services. This economic dimension is further corroborated by statements from participants involved in these initiatives. Fourthly, the creation of Tahfidz House is influenced by political considerations, with the intention of contesting the prevailing authority of traditional *pesantren*. As articulated by I3, *pesantren* have been linked to conservative and rigid pedagogical approaches, particularly within specific demographics. Consequently, Tahfidz House signifies an initiative by these groups to assert their presence in a public sphere that has been historically controlled by conventional *pesantren* in the realm of Islamic education.

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[I1] ... “Rumah Tahfidz Tasnim Darussalam aims to cultivate independence among its students. To facilitate this objective, the institution enforces stringent regulations that mandate each student to maintain a *lailatul hisab* model in written form, wherein they are required to document their positive and negative actions in accordance with the institution’s established guidelines”.



[I3] ... “The establishment of Rumah Tahfidz was primarily intended to provide educational opportunities for underprivileged children, with a particular emphasis on tahfidz. Although the institution initially concentrated on this aspect, it did not transition into an Islamic Boarding School. Instead, it has continued to function as a resource for community children who lack access to Quranic education, with the goal of enabling each student to memorize 30 juz”.

**Table 2. Motives in Establishment of the Tahfidz House**

Motives	Aimed	Interpretations
Theologies	Get blessings in life both in this world and the hereafter.	There are several institutions that aim to establish Tahfidz Houses as a means of worship with the expectation of rewards from God.
Social	Making Tahfidz House a means to resolve social pathology.	Some Tahfidz Houses are present as a means to fill the void in society due to the role and function of religious institutions that have not been able to maximize the needs of community religiosity.
Economic	As a means to strengthen economic networks and business investment.	Some Tahfidz Houses that are the subject of this research are present with economic motives. In general, the establishment of these institutions follows the Darul Quran pattern with a model of alms, investment, and economic improvement.
Politic	Mastering religious terms according to the understanding and character of a particular group.	The phenomenon of classical Islamic boarding schools is considered less suitable for the understanding of certain groups, so the establishment of Tahfidz Houses is intended to accommodate the needs of Islamic boarding schools that are in accordance with the character of certain groups.

Source: Researchers' elaboration.

Tahfidz House functions within a complex framework in which its founders seek to establish religious legitimacy by aligning themselves with recognized institutions in the field of Quranic studies. This alignment is particularly significant given their absence of a background in pesantren education, which is characterized by a well-defined tradition and a scholarly lineage, or sanad, from esteemed figures in Quranic scholarship. Although Tahfidz House does not possess formal affiliations, its management cites various authorities, including Ummidaera, Darul Quran, and other Quranic studies institutions, as resources for enhancing Quranic education, as noted by Diva (I1). Furthermore, Tahfidz House engages in collaborative efforts with Quranic studies institutions and maintains communication with Quranic boarding schools, some of which appoint ulama or kiai to their boards of trustees, as elucidated by Muzir (I8). Consequently, the founders of Tahfidz House, who lack recognized authority in Quranic studies, seek to bolster their legitimacy by associating with established authorities in the field.

According to the typology of pesantren, Tahfidz House can be classified into three distinct forms: full-pesantren, semi-pesantren, and non-pesantren, which represent an evolution of the Al-Quran Education Park (TPA). The full-pesantren Tahfidz House operates with educational activities akin to those of traditional boarding schools, necessitating that students reside in dormitories, particularly as enrollment numbers increase, as noted by Afif (I8). Conversely, the semi-pesantren Tahfidz House offers a curriculum affiliated with specific pesantren but does not mandate dormitory residency for its students, as indicated by Harya (I3). The non-pesantren Tahfidz House, on the other hand, adopts a learning model that prioritizes Quran memorization without the requirement for students to live in dormitories, as articulated by Umi (I6). Consequently, while Tahfidz House can be partially classified as a pesantren, there remains a necessity for a more

comprehensive understanding of the dynamics surrounding alternative Quranic education within society.

JID | 246 This study categorizes Tahfidz House as an innovative model of religious legitimization. The results reveal that Tahfidz House operates under two distinct forms of legitimization: registered and unregistered. As a registered entity, Tahfidz House acquires legal recognition from governmental bodies, specifically the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education. Registration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs grants Tahfidz House the authority to establish a pesantren, while its registration with the Ministry of Education enables the institution to engage in formal educational activities. In contrast, unregistered Tahfidz Houses are associated with particular Quran memorization organizations, such as Darul Quran and Ummidaera. In essence, these two models of legitimization exemplify the ijihad of the managers of Tahfidz House in their efforts to secure acknowledgment from both the community and governmental authorities.

#### *Contestation between Tahfidz House and Pesantren*

According to Pribadi (2014), pesantren serves as an educational institution that cultivates scholars, preserves cultural traditions, and disseminates religious knowledge. The role of pesantren as a genealogical conduit for the propagation of Islam throughout the archipelago has been shaped by centuries of acculturation and assimilation of local cultures. Nevertheless, the evolving interpretations and dynamic ideologies surrounding pesantren have undergone significant metamorphosis, adaptation, and modernization to align with contemporary contexts. The founder of Tahfidz House has developed terminology such as santri, ustadz, kiai, and muraja'ah within their educational framework, which directly references the pesantren tradition while exhibiting regional variations and unique characteristics across Indonesia. The recruitment process for prospective ustadz/teachers at Tahfidz House necessitates a comprehensive educational background to trace prior Quranic studies, thereby demonstrating the utilization of the pesantren framework as an educational tool. Although the characteristics and distinguishing features of Tahfidz House diverge from those of traditional pesantren, its establishment represents a process of inculturation of local Indonesian traditions, in alignment with the movement towards religious formalization. Consequently, the emergence of Tahfidz House as a response to the religious formalization movement engenders a contestation with pre-existing Quranic educational institutions, particularly pesantren.

The establishment of Tahfidz Houses in Yogyakarta has resulted in four distinct forms of contestation regarding management and pedagogical approaches. One notable area of contention pertains to the determination of authority, as illustrated by a statement from one of the managers who remarked, “*our institution is not a pesantren because the number of students is very small, although the learning model is very similar to that of a pesantren*” (I10). This statement underscores the ongoing association of Rumah Tahfidz with specific institutions dedicated to Qur'an memorization, which necessitates that each ustadz possess a recognized scientific sanad. Furthermore, it emphasizes the competitive dynamics surrounding the establishment of Tahfidz Houses, which are driven by various underlying motives, as elaborated in the preceding sub-chapter.

The second area of contention relates to the sources of funding. Through data mapping, the researcher identified four distinct funding sources: contributions from parents or guardians of students, regular donors, non-regular donors, and independent sources, as outlined in Table 3. As a newly established institution, Rumah Tahfidz does not adhere to the conventional practices of pesantren in Indonesia. One manager of Rumah Tahfidz indicated that their funding primarily derives from consistent donations from organizations such as Baitul Mal wa Tanwil, as well as the allocation of individual assets for the institution's development. Furthermore, participant I5 emphasized that the financial management of funds within Rumah Tahfidz is conducted in a professional manner. While the majority of participants noted that their funding is generated from business activities, including water sales, food stalls, car rentals, and printing services, they also allocate a portion of their assets to support the development of Rumah Tahfidz. However, Harya (I3) clarified that this allocation is motivated solely by the desire to attain the pleasure of Allah SWT. As discussed in the preceding subchapter, this group possesses a theological impetus that facilitates a novel avenue for the transformation of religious syarization in contemporary Indonesia. Regardless of whether the funding originates from individual or regular donors, the fund management model employed by Rumah Tahfidz has engendered new forms of religious contestation within the public sphere.

**Table 3. Funding Collection in Tahfidz Houses Management**

Source of Funds	Funding Model	Explanations
Parent donations	Donation/Voluntary	In general, the managers of the Tahfidz House will collect fees from the parents/guardians of the students to cover the operational costs of learning activities. Each Tahfidz House will differ in the rates given or required for each student.
Regular Donors	Alms Giving	Regular donors usually use the zakat mall and alms collection mechanism. Fundraising is managed professionally with the Baitul Mal wa Tanwil model based on the Mosque.
Unregular Donors	Endowment	The managers of the Tahfidz House make proposals independently which are then submitted to prospective regular donors to donate their funds. This is a step referred to as giving alms and alms for every Muslim.
Independent	Charitable Personal	Funds for the operational costs of the institution are usually done voluntarily by the founders. They collect and set aside some of their assets after selling or doing business. They call it beneficial assets for the benefit of religion and expect the pleasure of Allah SWT.

The emergence of Tahfidz House has instigated a new subculture within urban communities, leading to a contestation regarding the identity of pesantren, which has historically influenced the evolution of Islam in Indonesia. Participants in Tahfidz House adopt a comparable framework for establishing a Quranic institution aimed at children who engage in recreational activities after school. However, the developmental model of this institution is more aligned with the traditional pesantren structure. For example, Umi (I6) noted that the pedagogical approach is age-specific: children aged 3 to 6 focus on recognizing hijaiyah letters without utilizing Iqro; those aged 7 to 12 concentrates on memorizing shorter verses; and individuals over 12 years old shift their focus to Quranic memorization (tahfidz). Additionally, the Quranic teaching methodology encompasses

stages that include recognizing hijaiyah letters, memorizing tajweed, and subsequently allowing students to select from three program options: tahfidz, Juz ama translation, and Kaifatus Sholih (guidelines for becoming a pious individual), as articulated by Ali (I4). Consequently, the management's recognition of the Tahfidz House program does not align with traditional pesantren but rather reinterprets and reorganizes the concept and administration of pesantren in an effort to legitimize a new subculture within urban society.

The subsequent area of contention pertains to the phenomenon of religious reductionism, exemplified by the Tahfidz House initiative, which encompasses all principal religious schools in Indonesia while allowing participants to refrain from aligning with any particular school. Muzir (I8) articulates that it is imperative for learners to comprehend all madhhabs, a process that diminishes the complexity of religious models and undermines the pedagogical practices of pesantren. He further observes that, despite pesantren graduates possessing proficiency in subjects such as nahwu, sorof, and balaghoh, this knowledge is infrequently utilized in their daily lives following graduation. Harya (I3) similarly notes that the pedagogical approach of pesantren constrains students, resulting in a post-graduation experience that resembles the liberation of birds from confinement, with graduates often failing to embody religious moral values. Ultimately, Tahfidz House emerges as a novel entity that diverges from traditional pesantren, yet continues to simplify educational methodologies in alignment with the participants' objectives of fostering harmony.

The analysis of the four forms of contestation elucidates the formalization of religion as a significant aspect in the establishment of institutions dedicated to Quranic studies. The movement towards the implementation of Sharia law within the framework of Tahfidz House adheres to similar authoritative structures, which may occasionally lead to conflicts or instances of mutual legitimization between religious and scientific paradigms. This contestation serves as a referential framework for examining the role of Tahfidz House, wherein its underlying motives and objectives are perceived as interrelated elements that possess the capacity to reinforce and validate one another concerning the legitimacy of religious authority. The instructional practices at Tahfidz House illustrate that the contestation present is intricately connected to the evolving dynamics within pesantren, thereby contributing to a novel interpretation relevant to the contemporary context. Consequently, both Tahfidz House and pesantren emerge as critical components that necessitate careful consideration and negotiation, representing a new subculture within urban communities in Indonesia.

### *Distorted Perceptions on the Meaning of Pesantren*

The majority of participants consistently referenced the concept of "human beings" as articulated in the Quran during each interview session. This notion is interpreted as a discursive phenomenon that contributes to the transformation of pesantren (Islamic boarding schools). From various perspectives, the invocation of Quranic terminology is perceived as a means of religious infiltration, facilitating access to the learning process for specific groups. Participants argue that the pedagogical approaches employed in pesantren are time-intensive and complex, which they believe hinders the acquisition of knowledge. They contend that the rigid structure of these learning methods, which progresses from basic to advanced levels, detracts from the fundamental objectives of Quranic study. Afif (I8) suggested that an alternative approach to expedite the memorization of the Quran, which would be more readily accepted by certain communities, necessitates a departure

from the prevailing rigidity. Another participant provided an additional example to illustrate this point.

[I2] ... “Rumah Tahfidz Jogokaryan was founded in 2015 with the objective of serving the children in the vicinity of the Jogokariyan mosque. The primary focus of Rumah Tahfidz is the early childhood tahfidz program (TAUD). Additionally, we assess the prevailing trends within the local community to offer alternative Qur'anic education, thereby embodying the recognition that Allah SWT bestows rewards upon those who cherish the Qur'an, both in this life and in the afterlife.”

The text indicates that Tahfidz House has emerged as an alternative institution for Quranic education, catering to specific demographic groups. This assertion is supported by a statement from one of the administrators, who remarked, “we established Tahfidz House to respond to the needs of the community who are still in need of alternative Quranic educational facilities” (I6). This sentiment underscores the evolving discourse surrounding the concept of pesantren. Furthermore, participants acknowledged the distinction between pesantren and Tahfidz House as separate entities. One participant (I5) articulated, “I believe that the urban community has misunderstood the meaning of pesantren, which tends to be shabby, unhealthy, and confined; thus, the institution we established serves as a new facility for children in urban areas”. This observation highlights a misinterpretation of the pesantren model. JID | 249

The Quranization movement has sparked extensive discussions across various social dimensions, as evidenced in the literature. Hasyim (2022) posits that this movement signifies a process of sharization, which extends beyond the realms of politics and theology to include cultural aspects and the commercialization of religion. In a broader context, the establishment of Tahfidz House has emerged as a cultural mechanism for legitimizing religious structures. The terminology associated with this movement, such as Qurnai, Qurnai individuals, and Quranic akhlaq, is frequently employed in the discourse surrounding the establishment of Rumah Tahfidz, despite its structural distinctions from traditional pesantren. Scholars have identified a robust connection between Rumah Tahfidz and specific institutional Quranic authorities. Furthermore, I4 indicates that Rumah Tahfidz previously had ties to PPPA, and it is noteworthy that the founder's spouse is an alumnus of a pesantren. Additionally, I7 observes that Tataba Fatia Karima has engaged in collaboration with Quranic institutions to enhance their curriculum development.

In conclusion, Rumah Tahfidz represents a distinct entity from the traditional definition and concept of pesantren, which is recognized as the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia. The establishment of Rumah Tahfidz was driven by the pressures and support from urban communities that continue to seek religious facilities. Its founders aimed to provide a space for urban families to engage their children in productive activities after school. However, challenges such as limited access to resources, the necessity for Quranic education, financial constraints, and other factors have rendered Rumah Tahfidz a manifestation of the formalization of religious practices amidst the commodification prevalent in urban settings. The concept of sharization is closely linked to the Quranization movement, a contemporary religious phenomenon, as evidenced by the learning approaches adopted by participants, which often lack a definitive authority associated with traditional pesantren. Consequently, the emergence of Rumah Tahfidz can be

classified as a form of religious formalization within the context of sharization's rise amid the commodification of urban society in Indonesia.

### *Discussion*

JID | 250 This research elucidates a distinctive mechanism underlying the establishment of Rumah Tahfidz, which can be categorized into four primary points. Firstly, the founding of the Tahfidz House is driven by theological motivations, thereby introducing new discourses regarding the establishment of Islamic boarding schools. Secondly, social motivations arise as the administrators of the Tahfidz House endeavor to address social pathologies. Thirdly, economic motivations are evident through an investment model, with individual aspirations for financial gain. Lastly, political motivations emerge as a strategy to occupy public space, countering the dominance of traditional Islamic boarding schools that often exhibit authoritative tendencies and legitimize Quranic studies. These four points collectively illustrate a discourse surrounding the formalization of religion. This discourse corroborates the analyses conducted by (Budiwiranto, 2009) and (Bakri & Mangkachi, 2021), which indicate that pesantren have undergone transformations, with some being utilized by specific groups to assert religious legitimacy and authority.

Furthermore, this supports the perspectives of Hasyim (2021) and Burhani (2017), who argue that the phenomenon of Quranization is an integral aspect of the discourse surrounding Islamic thought movements, including Islam-turn, conservatism-turn, traditionalist-turn, liberalism-turn, among others. Additionally, the emergence of the Tahfidz House has incited debate among scholars of Islamic boarding schools and their subcultures within Indonesian society. This aligns with Basyit (2019), who questions whether the Tahfidz House constitutes a form of Islamic boarding school or represents a new institution aimed at garnering public trust in traditionalist Islamic hegemony. While the functions and objectives of the Tahfidz House markedly differ from those of pesantren with local traditions—such as student character, the role of Kiai (traditional religious leaders), and the recitation of classical texts (Izudin, 2021; Izudin et al., 2024; Pribadi, 2014)—it is evident that the motivations for establishing Rumah Tahfidz represent a novel variant within the pesantren discourse, with the founders strategically aligning themselves with certain authorities to elicit public sympathy (Kurniawan & Yuli, 2021; Ridwan et al., 2019).

The establishment of Rumah Tahfidz has sparked a religious contestation within the social sphere, which can be analyzed through four distinct dimensions. Firstly, the founders of these Tahfidz houses frequently invoke specific religious authorities, thereby commodifying communal values. As noted by Zamroni et al. (2022) and Karim et al. (2023), the phenomenon of the Tahfidz House appears to represent a formalization of religious practices, as it consistently seeks endorsement from authoritative institutions to garner public trust. Secondly, the founders engage in various initiatives to secure funding for the establishment of the Tahfidz House, a practice that diverges from the more autonomous funding approaches traditionally associated with pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) (Rachmawanti & Gunawan, 2023; Rahman, 2022). Thirdly, the emergence of the Tahfidz House has provided urban communities with a novel alternative for Qur'anic education, particularly as the educational methods employed in Islamic boarding schools are often perceived as rigid and inflexible (Syarif & Herlambang, 2023). Lastly, contestation is also evident in the role of the Tahfidz House as a transnational movement. This transnationalism reflects the infiltration of global religious movements into local Indonesian contexts, including Wahhabism,

ISIS, Tablighi Jamaat, Hizb ut-Tahrir, among others (Abubakar & Hemay, 2020; Machmudi, 2021; Malik, 2023). Such movements are viewed as potential threats to locality-based religious organizations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah.

The pesantren plays a crucial role in the development of Indonesia as a prominent institution of Islamic education, which has garnered increasing scholarly attention. A significant aspect of the ongoing discourse pertains to the emergence of new educational institutions that identify Islamic boarding schools as extensions of the pesantren, despite their differing traditions and cultural backgrounds. The establishment of Tahfidz houses, dedicated to Quranic studies, has ignited discussions regarding their significance and purpose. Some scholars argue that the proliferation of Tahfidz houses represents a contemporary manifestation of Islamic practice (Isbah, 2020). Key concepts related to the reinterpretation of the pesantren have emerged, often reflecting a skewed understanding among certain groups. (Hasyim, 2019) analyzes the presence of these institutions, highlighting a discursive pattern within interdisciplinary discussions concerning public space. While the Tahfidz houses do not explicitly endorse the shariatization movement, they are often associated with it. Consequently, the discourse surrounding the pesantren and Tahfidz houses has led to social contestation regarding the motivations behind their establishment and operational activities (Bourchier, 2019; Ghazali & Norshira, 2019).

Implicitly, Rumah Tahfidz serves as an Islamic institution within the framework of contemporary religious discourse. While pesantren have historically functioned as enduring Islamic educational establishments, the emergence of various modern iterations has fostered novel patterns of engagement with specific religious cultures and ideologies. The establishment of Tahfidz House has indeed catalyzed discussions surrounding Islamic boarding schools within a global context. More broadly, the interpretation of pesantren as Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia is not merely significant for local religious movements; it also facilitates the emergence of new discourses within the realm of international literacy. Consequently, the discourse surrounding transnational movements encompasses not only socio-political dimensions but also socio-educational aspects, embodying the principle of “think globally, act locally”.

The primary limitation of this study pertains to the exploration of the genealogical origins of Rumah Tahfidz within the broader context of the discourse and evolution of pesantren. It is recommended that future research endeavors focus on identifying, articulating, and mapping the ideological foundations underlying the establishment of Rumah Tahfidz, particularly in relation to its discourse, which does not explicitly categorize itself as a pesantren. Notably, the typology that has emerged exhibits a tendency to align with the discourse surrounding pesantren, which serves as the historical foundation of Islamic education in Indonesia. This observation suggests that pesantren have not only undergone metamorphosis and transformation but have also been redefined as a novel religious movement within urban society.

The findings of this study imply that the presence of Tahfidz Houses as an alternative educational model in Indonesia not only challenges the dominance of traditional pesantren but also reflects new dynamics in the formalization of religion, responding to the needs of urban communities. By integrating theological, social, economic, and political values, Tahfidz Houses emerge as entities accommodating the demand for Quranic education that is more flexible and relevant to urban contexts. However, this phenomenon also gives rise to contestations regarding

legitimacy, funding, and teaching methods, highlighting the process of adaptation and transformation of traditional Islamic institutions amidst the commodification of religious practices in urban society. These implications underscore the need for a deeper understanding of the interaction between Islamic educational traditions, modern societal demands, and the phenomenon of sharization in building more inclusive and contextual institutions.

## Conclusion

The primary conclusion of the current study is that pesantren represent the oldest educational institutions in Indonesia, which have undergone significant transformation and evolution, resulting in the emergence of new variants and typologies within urban society. The establishment of the Tahfidz House serves not only as an alternative form of public education but also as a mechanism for the formalization of a new religious movement. The founders of Rumah Tahfidz have adeptly capitalized on the socio-cultural dynamics of Indonesian society, which is predominantly characterized by a Sunni identity. This context has been leveraged by certain groups to introduce innovative methods for Quranic education. Concurrently, the proliferation of the Tahfidz House can be viewed as a movement aimed at the formalization of religion, sharing similar characteristics and typologies with the traditional pesantren system, which is the oldest educational framework in Indonesia. Consequently, Rumah Tahfidz has emerged as a viable alternative for urban communities, albeit with the potential to create new divisions within the Islamic boarding school landscape.

The establishment of Rumah Tahfidz as an alternative Qur'anic educational institution has yielded positive outcomes; however, it is essential to acknowledge the accompanying negative repercussions that warrant consideration. One significant concern is the potential fragmentation of the traditional Islamic education system, particularly among conventional Islamic boarding schools. Rumah Tahfidz, which prioritizes simplified pedagogical approaches and emphasizes Qur'anic memorization, is often perceived as neglecting the broader aspects of Islamic scholarship, including tafsir, fiqh, and tasawuf, which are typically integral to the curriculum of traditional Islamic boarding schools. This divergence may result in disparities in the quality of Islamic education provided. Furthermore, the presence of Rumah Tahfidz may exacerbate social segregation within urban communities. As institutions frequently backed by specific groups with particular ideologies or objectives, Rumah Tahfidz can serve as instruments for reinforcing the exclusivity of certain factions, thereby diminishing intergroup interactions within a diverse Muslim society. Additionally, an excessive focus on Qur'anic memorization, without a corresponding emphasis on comprehension or the application of Qur'anic principles, risks reducing the spiritual significance of the Qur'an to mere ritualistic practices. This outcome contradicts the fundamental aim of Islamic education, which is to cultivate individuals who not only memorize the Qur'an but also comprehend and embody its teachings in their daily lives.

A recurring theme in this study is the concept of *Manusia Qurani*, defined as individuals who engage with the Quran, comprehend its meanings, and embody Quranic values in their lives—representing a novel variant of the shariatization movement. This research contributes to the revitalization of the Quranic discourse associated with Islamic boarding schools, particularly through the lens of the Tahfidz House, which offers a straightforward and non-affiliated approach to Quranic learning, distinct from traditional pesantren. However, this study acknowledges its



limitations in thoroughly analyzing and mapping the genealogical aspects or origins of the Tahfidz House movement. As a recommendation for future research, it is suggested that a comprehensive examination of the ideologies and typologies of Islamic boarding schools be conducted to elucidate the diverse motives and objectives underlying their establishment. This endeavor aims to enhance the understanding of the evolving traditions, characteristics, and cultural dynamics within urban society.

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