

RECEPTION AND PRACTICE OF MUHAMMAD AL-GHAZALI'S THOUGHT WITHIN THE ONE DAY ONE JUZ COMMUNITY IN MEDAN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the reception of Muhammad al-Ghazali's ideas as articulated in his work *Kayfa Nata 'āmal ma 'a al-Qur'ān* within the One Day One Juz (ODOJ) community in Medan. It focuses on how al-Ghazali's concept of reflective engagement with the Qur'an is understood, interpreted, and practiced through the community's daily activity of reading one juz of the Qur'an. Employing a qualitative approach with descriptive-interpretive analysis, this study explores the dynamics of this phenomenon. Three theoretical frameworks—Reception Theory, Social Practice Theory, and Cultural Transformation Theory—are applied to analyze the processes of reception, the formation of everyday religious practices, and the adaptation of classical Islamic thought within the context of modern urban Muslim life. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of community activities. The findings reveal that al-Ghazali's teachings inspire spiritual intimacy and the cultivation of pious habits through Qur'anic recitation. The community's reception is active and contextual, shaped by social, cultural, and digital factors. This study concludes that classical Islamic thought remains relevant and can be effectively integrated into contemporary religious movements in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Muhammad al-Ghazali, One Day One Juz, Reception Theory, Qur'anic Thought.*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penerimaan gagasan Muhammad al-Ghazali sebagaimana yang diartikulasikan dalam karyanya *Kayfa Nata' āmal ma 'a al-Qur'ān* dalam komunitas *One Day One Juz (ODOJ)* di Kota Medan. Penelitian ini berfokus pada bagaimana konsep al-Ghazali tentang interaksi reflektif dengan Al-Qur'an dipahami, ditafsirkan, dan dipraktikkan melalui aktivitas keseharian komunitas tersebut yaitu membaca satu juz. Pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis deskriptif-interpretatif digunakan untuk mengeksplorasi fenomena ini. Tiga kerangka teori yaitu Teori Resepsi, Teori Praktik Sosial, dan Teori Transformasi Budaya diterapkan untuk menganalisis proses resepsi, pembentukan praktik keagamaan sehari-hari, dan adaptasi gagasan klasik dalam konteks Muslim urban modern. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi kegiatan komunitas. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa ajaran al-Ghazali menginspirasi keintiman spiritual dan kebiasaan melakukan tindakan saleh melalui pembacaan Al-Qur'an. Resepsi komunitas bersifat aktif, kontekstual, dan dipengaruhi oleh faktor sosial, budaya, dan digital. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pemikiran Islam klasik tetap relevan dan dapat diintegrasikan secara efektif ke dalam gerakan keagamaan kontemporer di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: *Muhammad al-Ghazali; Satu Hari Satu Juz; Teori Penerimaan; Pandangan tentang Al-Qur'an.*

A. Introduction

The Qur'an occupies a central position in the spiritual life of Muslims, functioning not only as a sacred text to be recited but also as a foundational source of ethics, law, and existential orientation.¹ Throughout the history of Islamic thought, numerous scholars and Muslim intellectuals have developed theories and approaches to the reading and interpretation of the Qur'an.² Among these figures, Muhammad al-Ghazali (1917–1996) stands out as a prominent contemporary Muslim thinker who made significant contributions to the intellectual revival of modern Islam. Widely recognized as a moderate Egyptian intellectual, al-Ghazali sought to bridge classical Islamic teachings with the challenges of modernity through a rational, contextual, and Qur'an-centered approach.³ Al-Ghazali's works extensively address contemporary religious issues, including the question of how Muslims should engage with the Qur'an in a dynamic and reflective manner. One of his most influential works, *Kayfa Nata 'āmal ma 'a al-Qur'ān*,⁴ emphasizes the importance of *tadabbur* (deep reflection), the internalization of meaning, and the cultivation of righteous deeds as expressions of spiritual intimacy with the Qur'an. This perspective remains highly relevant in the modern era, in which religious practices often tend toward formalism and ritualism, sometimes at the expense of meaningful engagement. Al-Ghazali underscores the necessity of understanding the Qur'an in a contextual, lived, and socially grounded manner. His ideas were later examined systematically by Muhammad Quasem in *The Recitation and Interpretation of the Qur'an: Al-Ghazali's Theory*, which elaborates on concepts such as mental tasks, the role of the heart, and the stages of text-meaning-response as the foundation of an ideal interaction with the Qur'an.⁵

The book *Kayfa Nata 'āmal ma 'a al-Qur'ān*, which promotes reflective and practical engagement with the Qur'an rather than purely mechanical or ceremonial recitation, is particularly relevant to contemporary efforts to revitalize Qur'anic spirituality and awareness among Muslims living in an era marked by rapid social, cultural, and technological change. In Indonesia, particularly in the city of Medan, various Qur'anic study and digital recitation communities have emerged, one of which is the One Day One Juz (ODOJ) community. This community was established to revive the tradition of consistently reading one juz of the Qur'an each day through social media networks and online mentoring systems. Beyond enhancing spiritual discipline, this practice has fostered a new form of religious culture that integrates digital technology with Qur'anic tradition. Founded in 2013, ODOJ has developed

¹ Abd. Wahid et al., "Study on The Nurul Quran Method at The Syakirin Center of Al-Qur'an Education," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah* 20, no. 2 (August 30, 2023): 369, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jim.v20i2.19861>.

² Toha Andiko, Isna Mutia, and Nazaryani Nazaryani, "THE RULING ON WISHING MERRY CHRISTMAS TO NON-MUSLIMS: AN ANALYSIS OF M. QURAISH SHIHAB'S INTERPRETATIONS," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah* 21, no. 1 (June 29, 2024): 139, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jim.v21i1.20040>.

³ Muhammad Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyah Bayna Ahl Al-Fiqh Wa Ahl Al-Hadīth* (Kairo: Dār al-Syurūq, 1989), pp. 21-23.

⁴ Muhammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata 'āmal Ma 'a Al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: Dār al-Syurūq, 1991).

⁵ Muhammad Abdul Quasem, 'Al-Ghazali - The Recitation and Interpretation of the Qur'an - Al-Ghazali's Theory.Pdf' (Kuala Lumpur: The University of Malaya Press, 1979), pp. 1-121.

as a socio-religious movement aimed at encouraging Muslims to maintain daily Qur'anic recitation while simultaneously strengthening bonds of *ukhuwah* through digital networks.⁶

A number of previous studies have examined the phenomenon of the One Day One Juz (ODOJ) community and the practice of Qur'anic recitation within various social contexts. For instance, a study entitled *Ngaji on the Street (One Day One Juz) Wonosobo: A Sociology of Knowledge Perspective* explores the ODOJ community in Wonosobo through Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge framework. This study demonstrates how the daily practice of reciting one juz of the Qur'an is understood as a strategy for bringing the Qur'an closer to everyday social life, as well as a form of collective religious praxis that strengthens Muslim identity in both public and digital spaces.⁷ Another study conducted by researchers from UIN Saizu Purbalingga highlights the contribution of ODOJ activities to the development of children's spiritual intelligence through daily *tadarus* practices organized via WhatsApp groups.⁸ The findings indicate a significant integration of digital technology in reinforcing spiritual values among community members. In addition, the study *Young Muslim Generation and Online Media-Based Spiritual Social Movements* analyzes the role of online media in shaping spiritual movements among young Muslims, including the ODOJ community, with particular attention to communication dynamics, religious motivation, and the formation of social solidarity.⁹ Meanwhile, a systematic literature review entitled *Analysis of Qur'an Memorization Methods: Academically Talented Students* identifies a wide range of *tilawah* and *tahfiz* methods that developed in Indonesia between 2018 and 2024.¹⁰ This review reveals that Qur'anic recitation practices often emphasize quantitative achievements, such as memorization targets or the number of juz completed, while aspects of reflection and the internalization of meaning have not yet become a primary focus.

These four studies provide an important foundation for understanding Qur'anic recitation practices and the dynamics of Qur'anic communities in Indonesia. However, no research to date has specifically connected the practices of the ODOJ community with the thought of Muhammad al-Ghazali, particularly his concept of *mental tasks* in interacting with the Qur'an. This gap constitutes the core novelty of the present study, which explores the reception and practice of al-Ghazali's ideas within the ODOJ community in the city of Medan. The research problem emerges from the tension between al-Ghazali's ideal model of Qur'anic engagement—one that emphasizes the integration of recitation, understanding, and spiritual transformation—and the realities of contemporary communal recitation practices, which often prioritize quantitative targets over reflective engagement. To date,

⁶ Komunitas One Day One Juz, "Profil Komunitas One Day One Juz (ODOJ 2025)." (Jakarta, 2025).

⁷ Nilna Dina and Maurisa Zinira, "Ngaji on The Street (One Day One Juz) Wonosobo: Tinjauan Sosiologi Pengetahuan," *Syariati: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Hukum* 10, no. 2 (2024): 239–52, <https://doi.org/10.32699/syariati.v10i2.8078>.

⁸ Kholid Mawardi and Eka Muawali Nurhayah, "Penguatan Kecerdasan Spiritual Anak Melalui Kegiatan Tadarus Al-Qur'an: Studi Kasus Komunitas One Day One Juz Di Purbalingga," *Yinyang: Jurnal Studi Islam Gender Dan Anak* 15, no. 2 (2020): 245–62.

⁹ Puji Hariyanti, "Generasi Muda Muslim Dan Gerakan Sosial Spiritual Berbasis Media Online," *Jurnal ILMU KOMUNIKASI* 13, no. 2 (2017): 165–78, <https://doi.org/10.24002/jik.v13i2.671>.

¹⁰ Gifa Oktavia et al., "Analysis of Quran Memorization Methods: Academically Talented Students," *Journal of Theory and Research Memorization Quran* 1, no. 1 (2025): 40–50.

there has been no in-depth study examining the reception and practical application of al-Ghazali's thought within digital Qur'anic recitation communities in Indonesia, despite the significant role such communities play in shaping new forms of religious culture among urban Muslims.¹¹

This study aims to analyze the forms of reception and practice of Muhammad al-Ghazali's thought within the ODOJ community in Medan. Its primary focus is twofold: first, to examine how community members understand and interpret al-Ghazali's ideas on interacting with the Qur'an; and second, to assess the extent to which their recitation practices reflect or diverge from al-Ghazali's mental-spiritual framework. Drawing on reception theory, social practice theory, and cultural transformation theory, this study seeks to uncover the dynamics through which classical Islamic ideas are received and rearticulated within modern religious and social spaces. The novelty of this research lies in its integration of classical Islamic thought—particularly al-Ghazali's conceptual framework—with the contemporary phenomenon of digital Qur'anic recitation communities, a topic that remains underexplored in Indonesian scholarship. This study thus contributes conceptually to the field of reception studies in Islamic thought while also offering practical reflections for the development of more meaningful and context-sensitive models of Qur'anic recitation in the digital era.¹²

To analyze the reception and practice of Muhammad al-Ghazali's thought within the One Day One Juz (ODOJ) community in the city of Medan, this study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design, focusing on two main dimensions: (1) forms of reception of al-Ghazali's ideas and (2) forms of communal Qur'anic recitation practices in relation to the mental-spiritual principles formulated by al-Ghazali. First, with regard to the dimension of reception, this study identifies how community members understand and interpret al-Ghazali's ideas on interacting with the Qur'an, particularly as articulated in his work *Kayfa Nata 'āmal ma 'a al-Qur'ān* and further elaborated in *The Recitation and Interpretation of the Qur'an: Al-Ghazali's Theory*. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation of recitation activities, and analysis of community documents, including recitation guidelines, study materials, and social media content. For the interview stage, twelve informants were involved, consisting of two ODOJ Medan coordinators, eight active members, and two new members. Informants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure their relevant involvement in and understanding of recitation practices, complemented by snowball sampling to reach members who actively share reflections, engage in digital *tadabbur*, or play significant roles in community dynamics. Second, in the dimension of practice, this study analyzes the ODOJ community's daily recitation activities as a form of actualizing al-Ghazali's thought. The analysis was conducted by categorizing stages of Qur'anic interaction as formulated by al-Ghazali—namely the stages of text,

¹¹ Aiyub Aiyub and Isna Mutia, "Muhammad Quraish Shihab's Methodology in Interpretation of The Qur'an," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu Ashirah* 20, no. 1 (January 30, 2023): 1, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jim.v20i1.16891>.

¹² Yuni Roslaili et al., "ACCESSIBILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF QUR'ANIC BRAILLE INSTRUCTION FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY AT BUKESRA, BANDA ACEH" 22, no. 1 (2025): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jim.v22i1.28652>.

meaning, and response—and by classifying levels of reception ranging from literal reading to reflective internalization.

The data were analyzed thematically using coding techniques and conceptual categorization based on reception theory and social practice theory.¹³ This approach enables the identification of diverse patterns of reception within the community, while also revealing gaps and potential points of integration between al-Ghazali's thought and contemporary Qur'anic recitation practices. The scope of analysis is limited to the ODOJ community in Medan, with a focus on the routine activity of reading one juz per day and the forms of reflection developed by members in relation to that practice. This study does not examine ODOJ as a national organizational institution; rather, it concentrates on the dynamics of reception and practice at the level of the local community.

B. Results and Discussion

a. Forms of Reception of Muhammad al-Ghazali's Thought

Al-Ghazali's ideas concerning engagement with the Qur'an are grounded in the principle that *tilāwah* is not merely a verbal activity but a spiritual and intellectual process that involves the reader's entire being.¹⁴ In his work *Kayfa Natā 'āmal ma 'a al-Qur'ān*, al-Ghazali emphasizes the necessity of presenting the heart and full awareness in every act of Qur'anic recitation. He formulates a set of *mental tasks*, namely inner obligations that must be internalized by a *qāri'*, such as cultivating a sense of reverence toward Allah as the One who "speaks" through His verses, deeply contemplating the meanings of the verses, directing the divine message as though it were personally addressed to oneself, and responding to it with feelings of fear, hope, and humility.¹⁵ This conception of Qur'anic recitation does not end with phonetic articulation and the rules of *tajwīd* but develops into a transformational experience that shapes spiritual awareness and social behavior. This approach demonstrates that al-Ghazali positions the Qur'an as a source of character formation and communal consciousness, rather than merely a text to be memorized or routinely recited. These ideas are particularly relevant in contemporary contexts, where practices of *tilāwah* often emphasize the quantity of recitation over the quality of meaning internalization. In this regard, al-Ghazali's thought serves as a normative and conceptual foundation for understanding contemporary Qur'anic recitation communities, such as the One Day One Juz (ODOJ) Community, which revitalizes the tradition of collectively reading one *juz'* each day through the support of digital technology and social networks.

In practice, members of the ODOJ community in Medan consistently read one juz of the Qur'an each day through coordinated activities conducted via WhatsApp groups and the ODOJ application. This system facilitates collective monitoring, mutual motivation, and regular reminders. Observations and interviews indicate that most members perceive the act of recitation as a form of routine worship and a means of maintaining daily spiritual consistency. However, the *mental tasks* proposed by al-Ghazali have not yet been fully

¹³ Nurlaela Wati, *Metodologi Penelitian*, 1 st Editi (Mujahidin Press, 2021).

¹⁴ Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi and Universitas Darussalam Gontor, "A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SEMITIC RHETORICAL ANALYSIS , HERMENEUTICS , AND BIBLICAL CRITICISM IN QUR'ANIC STUDIES : METHODOLOGICAL" 22, no. 1 (2025): 14–28, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2011.0003.5>.

¹⁵ Quasem, pp. 56-85.

integrated in a comprehensive manner. Several participants acknowledged that their primary focus remains on completing the daily juz target rather than engaging in sustained reflection and internalization of Qur'anic meanings. Nevertheless, a smaller group of members has developed independent practices of *tadabbur*, such as reading translations, listening to brief Qur'anic commentaries, or writing personal reflections following recitation. These findings indicate varying levels of reception and enactment of al-Ghazali's thought within the community. While some forms of reception remain textual and quantitative—centered on the volume of recitation—others increasingly reflect a more reflective and praxis-oriented mode of engagement. Accordingly, the recitation practices of the ODOJ community can be understood as a dynamic form of reception of al-Ghazali's ideas. Although not all members internalize the full range of mental stages he formulated, the community nonetheless serves as a potential platform for strengthening spiritual engagement with the Qur'an in the digital era.

The reception of al-Ghazali's thought within the One Day One Juz (ODOJ) community can be understood through three stages: literal, reflective, and praxis-oriented reception. The first stage, namely literal reception, occupies a crucial position as the foundational level in the process of internalizing Qur'anic meaning. Within the classical Islamic tradition, al-Ghazālī, in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, emphasizes that the initial step in engaging with the Qur'an is to recite it with *tartīl* while maintaining conscious awareness that what is being read is the *kalām Allāh*.¹⁶ This view is further reinforced by al-Nawawī in *Al-Tibyān fī Ādāb Ḥamalat al-Qur'ān*, which highlights proper recitational etiquette, precision in *tajwīd*, and continuity of recitation as forms of literal reverence for the sacred text.¹⁷ Modern scholarship likewise provides a strong theoretical foundation for this perspective. William A. Graham, in *Beyond the Written Word*, explains that literal recitation serves as the primary gateway to the internalization of sacred texts across religious traditions.¹⁸ Andrew Rippin analyzes *tilawah* as an autonomous sound-text practice, not merely as a preliminary stage of Qur'anic interpretation.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Anna M. Gade, through her ethnographic research in Indonesia, demonstrates that literal reception through recitation and memorization plays a significant role in shaping contemporary Muslim religious identity.²⁰ To synthesize these theoretical foundations, Table 1 presents a map of key scholarly works that reinforce the argument for the centrality of literal reception in both classical Islamic tradition and modern academic studies.

¹⁶ Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn*, ed. by Juz 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah), pp. 274.

¹⁷ Al-Nawawī, *Al-Tibyān Fī Ādāb Ḥamalat Al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: Dār al-Manār), pp. 22.

¹⁸ William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1987), pp. 36.

¹⁹ Claude Gilliot and Andrew Rippin, "Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an," *Studia Islamica*, 1989, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1596080>.

²⁰ Anna M. Gade, *Perfection Makes Practice: Learning, Emotion, and the Recited Qur'an in Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), pp. 24.

Table 1. Key Literature on Literal Reception

No.	Author/Year	Title/Work	Focus of Study	Context/Location	Contribution to the Study of Literal Reception
1.	Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (n.d.)	<i>Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn</i>	Spiritual stages of interacting with the Qur'an, with the first stage emphasizing recitation (<i>tilawah</i>) with <i>tartīl</i>	Classical Islamic tradition	Serves as a normative foundation for establishing literal reception as the initial stage of conscious engagement with the <i>kalām Allāh</i>
2.	Al-Nawawī (n.d.)	<i>Al-Tibyān fī Ādāb Ḥamalat al-Qur'ān</i>	Etiquette and ethics of Qur'anic reciters	Classical Islamic tradition	Emphasizes the importance of <i>tajwīd</i> , accurate pronunciation, and continuity of recitation as forms of literal reverence for the sacred text
3.	William Graham (1987)	<i>Beyond the Written Word</i>	The role of orality in religious traditions	Religions (including Islam)	Explains that literal recitation constitutes the initial stage of internalizing sacred texts
4.	Andrew Rippin (1999)	“Literary Analysis of Qur'anic Recitation”	Analysis of literal reception of Qur'anic recitation	The Muslim world in general	Examines <i>tilawah</i> as a sound-text practice rather than merely

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5.	Anna M. Gade (2004)	<i>Perfection Makes Practice</i>	Practices of Indonesia	Indonesia	an interpretive activity		

Beyond literal reception, Muhammad Amin and Muhammad Arfah Nurhayat identify two additional and more profound forms of reception: reflective reception and praxis-oriented reception. Reflective reception refers to a mode of engaging with the Qur'an that does not stop at the verbal articulation of the text but develops into a process of *tadabbur* and contemplation of its meanings.²¹ At this stage, readers seek to understand the content of the verses more deeply and to relate them to their personal life experiences as well as to broader social realities. The authors explain that reflective reception functions as a bridge between verbal recitation and semantic awareness; readers approach the Qur'an as a source of contemplation and self-reflection, rendering their interaction with the sacred text inward-oriented and contextual rather than mechanical.²² Within Qur'anic recitation communities, this form of reception is typically manifested in activities such as recording verses that resonate emotionally, engaging in thematic discussions, and sharing *tadabbur* notes within community forums.

Praxis-oriented reception represents the highest form of reception in the process of engaging with the Qur'an, as the understanding of Qur'anic verses is translated into concrete behavior. At this stage, Qur'anic values are internalized and embodied in everyday actions across personal, social, and spiritual domains. Amin and Nurhayat emphasize that praxis-oriented reception serves as tangible evidence that interaction with the Qur'an does not remain at the cognitive level but leads toward ethical and social transformation.²³ This form of reception may be reflected in increased social awareness, changes in family relationships, the strengthening of work ethics, and the application of Qur'anic teachings in communal life.

Reflective and praxis-oriented reception together illustrate the deeper dynamics of Qur'anic reception, demonstrating how the reading of verses generates awareness, which in turn motivates concrete action in daily life. This receptional structure closely resonates with al-Ghazali's ideas in *Kayfa Nata 'āmal ma 'a al-Qur'ān*, which emphasize that engagement with the Qur'an must involve inner contemplation and the comprehensive enactment of

²¹ Achmad Fuaddin et al., "THE TRADITION OF KUNDANGAN IN THE LAST TEN DAYS OF RAMADAN: A STUDY OF LIVING HADITH IN DASIN TUBAN VILLAGE THROUGH THE LENS OF KARL MANNHEIM'S SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE." 21, no. 2 (2024): 214–31.

²² Muhammad Amin and Muhammad Arfah Nurhayat, "Resepsi Masyarakat Terhadap Al-Quran," *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, Dan Fenomena Agama* 21, no. 2 (2020): 290–303, <https://doi.org/10.19109/jia.v21i2.7423>.

²³ Amin and Nurhayat.

divine values. The reception of Muhammad al-Ghazali's thought among members of the One Day One Juz (ODOJ) community reveals considerable diversity in how they understand and internalize the concept of inward engagement with the Qur'an. Some members perceive *tilawah* as a spiritual activity that must be accompanied by the presence of the heart (*hudūr al-qalb*) and full awareness of God's presence in every verse recited. This understanding aligns closely with al-Ghazali's argument in *Kayfa Nata 'āmal ma 'a al-Qur'ān* that *tilawah* is not merely a verbal exercise but a contemplative and transformational process that mobilizes both heart and intellect to respond deeply to the divine word.²⁴ The connection between al-Ghazali's ideas and the personal motivations of community members is evident in the way they position daily recitation as a means of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) and the enhancement of spiritual intimacy. Many members expressed that reading one juz per day helps them maintain consistency in worship and cultivate an inner sense of tranquility, in accordance with al-Ghazali's principle that the Qur'an should be approached as if God were "speaking" directly to its reader.²⁵

This reception typology also helps identify variations in religious understanding and experience within the community. Some ODOJ members remain at the literal stage, focusing primarily on recitation and *tajwīd*; others progress to the reflective stage through *tadabbur* activities; while a more advanced group demonstrates a praxis-oriented form of reception, characterized by the application of Qur'anic values in everyday behavior. The following table summarizes the key characteristics of each form of reception within the context of the ODOJ community.

Table 2. Typology of Qur'anic Reception within the ODOJ Community

Form of Reception	Primary Focus	Member Characteristics	Examples of Practice
Literal	Recitation and pronunciation	Focus on completing daily juz targets and observing <i>tajwīd</i> rules	Daily reporting
Reflective	Understanding of meaning	Contemplation of verses, reflective note-taking	Writing journals
Praxis-oriented	Implementation of values	Observable changes in social behavior	Regular charity, moral improvement

The table above provides only a general overview of the forms of Qur'anic reception within the ODOJ community. To gain a deeper understanding of these reception dynamics, it is necessary to explain how the three forms are manifested in the everyday practices of community members. Based on observations of daily recitation activities and in-depth interviews with several ODOJ members in the city of Medan, this study finds that patterns of reception toward al-Ghazali's thought can be categorized into three interrelated and sequential stages: literal, reflective, and praxis-oriented.

The literal stage emphasizes recitation and pronunciation, the reflective stage focuses on contemplation of the meanings of the verses, while the praxis-oriented stage demonstrates

²⁴ Muhammad al-Ghazālī, pp. 135-138.

²⁵ Quasem, pp. 34-55..

the transformation of understanding into concrete action. Together, these forms of reception illustrate how al-Ghazali's teachings on interacting with the Qur'an—ranging from recitation with *tartīl* to the embodiment of Qur'anic values—are enacted within the lived experiences of a contemporary Qur'anic recitation community. The following discussion elaborates on each form of reception, accompanied by selected excerpts from the experiences of community members.

The first stage is literal reception, characterized by a primary focus on the quantity of recitation and the accuracy of textual pronunciation. Community members at this stage perceive *tilāwah* as a routine activity that must be completed daily, in accordance with the one-*juz*-per-day target that defines the ODOJ movement. They pay close attention to the rules of *tajwīd*, fluency, and consistency in recitation. Al-Ghazali himself asserts that the initial stage of interacting with the Qur'an is reciting it with *tartīl* while maintaining the awareness that what is being read is the *kalām Allah*. This stage can thus be understood as the foundational level of a deeper spiritual reception. One community member stated: “*My focus is still on completing one juz every day. Once I finish it, I feel calm, even though I may not fully understand the meaning.*”²⁶

The second stage is reflective reception, in which members begin to contemplate the meanings of the verses and relate them to their personal experiences and everyday realities. At this stage, *tilāwah* does not stop at verbal articulation but develops into a process of meaning-making. Members often mark particular verses that resonate with their life situations and share their reflections through ODOJ WhatsApp groups or during online study sessions. Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of *tadabbur* as a bridge between the text and the reader's inner consciousness. According to him, reciting the Qur'an without reflecting on its meanings produces sound rather than awareness. As one member explained: “*When I come across a verse that really fits my situation, I usually mark it and reflect on it after finishing my recitation.*”²⁷

The third stage is practical reception, marked by efforts to internalize the Qur'anic message into concrete actions. Members at this level use the outcomes of their *tilāwah* as a guide for social and moral conduct, such as improving family relationships, strengthening work ethics, or actively participating in socio-religious activities. This represents the highest form of reception, as it reflects a tangible process of self-transformation. Al-Ghazali describes this stage as *tahqīq al-istijābah*, namely the realization of obedience through concrete deeds after comprehending God's message. As one community coordinator explained: “*Whenever I read verses about charity, I try to put them into practice immediately, no matter how small. I believe that tilāwah is not only for the heart, but also for action.*”²⁸

This layered pattern of reception demonstrates that al-Ghazali's thought can be dynamically adapted within contemporary *tilāwah* communities. Each level of reception represents a spiritual stage that is not rigidly hierarchical but flexible and mutually reinforcing. Individuals may move from the literal to the reflective stage, and subsequently

²⁶ ODOJ Member, *Personal Interview with an ODOJ Member*, January 12, 2025.

²⁷ ODOJ Member

²⁸ ODOJ Coordinator, *Personal Interview with the ODOJ Coordinator*, January 12, 2025.

to the practical stage, as their understanding and spiritual experience deepen. These findings highlight the continued relevance of al-Ghazali's classical ideas in framing modern *tilāwah* practices, particularly in integrating mental, spiritual, and social dimensions in a harmonious manner.

b. Critical Analysis: Creative versus Formalistic Reception

In the context of the reception of religious thought, differences in approach often emerge between formalistic reception, which emphasizes textual fidelity and normative methods, and creative reception, which seeks to interpret texts dynamically in response to the demands of changing times.²⁹ Al-Ghazali's thought exhibits an integrative hermeneutical character. He endeavors to reconcile rationality (*al-'aql*) and spirituality (*al-naql*), so that engagement with the Qur'an does not remain confined to literal recitation but becomes an effort to actualize its moral message within social life. This orientation aligns closely with the approach of creative reception, in which the sacred text is continually re-actualized through reflection and concrete action.³⁰ Al-Ghazali's ideas emerged amid the rise of modern thematic Qur'anic interpretation promoted by Egyptian reformers such as Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida. However, unlike 'Abduh, who emphasized legal rationality, al-Ghazali positioned the Qur'an primarily as a source of ethical and social transformation. He rejected readings that rely solely on lexical or literal meanings, arguing that divine messages must penetrate human inner consciousness and shape moral character. This approach renders his interpretation theocentric humanistic, wherein human values are understood as expressions of devotion to God. Through works such as *Nahwa Tafsīr Mawdū'i li Suwar al-Qur'an al-Karīm*, al-Ghazali articulated the principles of *the Qur'an as a unity* and *the sūrah as a unit*, asserting that each chapter possesses a central theme that must be understood holistically and contextually.³¹ This methodological stance marks an epistemological shift from formalistic reception toward creative, philosophically and contextually grounded hermeneutical reception. By proportionally integrating *al-'aql* and *al-naql*, al-Ghazali framed interpretation not merely as the reproduction of meaning, but as a dialogical process involving the text, social reality, and the historical consciousness of its readers. Within this framework, al-Ghazali's *tafsīr* may be understood as a form of productive reception, characterized by the active engagement of interpreters and reading communities in revitalizing the Qur'an's moral message for modern contexts.

In literary studies and Islamic thought, the reception approach plays a crucial role in understanding how texts are received and interpreted by readers. As developed by Hans

²⁹ Abdul Mufid et al., "Rereading Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's Method of Interpreting Religious Texts," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023): 1–6, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8102>; Abdul Mufid et al., "The Presence of Anthropological Approaches in Contemporary Readings of Islamic Thought," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7760>.

³⁰ Aldi Surizkika, "Educational Qualifications Of Du'at: An Analysis Of Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1917-1996) Thought," *Mustaneer: Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 1, no. 1 (2025): 26–39, <https://doi.org/10.61630/mjtc.v1i1.5>.

³¹ Wardatun Nadhiroh, "Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an Muhammad Al-Ghazali," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 15, no. 2 (2014): 281–98, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2014.1502-03>.

Robert Jauss³² through the concept of the “*horizon of expectations*,” this theory explains that the meaning of a work is not determined solely by the text itself, but also by the ways in which readers interpret it in light of their cultural, social, and historical backgrounds. Meaning, therefore, is dynamic and contextual, allowing for creative readings of classical texts. Within the Islamic context, Jauss’s reception theory can be paralleled with the exegetical tradition that emphasizes *tafa’ul* (active engagement) between the reader and the text. Although al-Ghazali did not explicitly employ the terminology of Western hermeneutics, his thought reflects a similar principle: the meaning of revelation is always situated within the horizon of human experience. Accordingly, reading the Qur’ān is not merely a linguistic process, but a spiritual act that engages emotion, reason, and intention. This perspective opens space for contextual readings across different times and places.

The One Day One Juz (ODOJ) community in Medan is a digitally mediated network based on WhatsApp and Telegram that integrates religious ritual with the ethos of online community. Its members come from diverse social backgrounds, including university students, office employees, homemakers, and young professionals. The group structure assigns each participant the responsibility of completing one *juz* per day and reporting their progress within the group. This pattern creates an effective system of social and spiritual accountability in the digital era. More importantly, digital interaction facilitates a form of spiritual resonance,³³ whereby individual recitation becomes part of a collective movement of *tilāwah* that reinforces a shared religious identity. When this approach is adopted by contemporary religious communities such as ODOJ in Medan, a dialectic emerges between two major modes of reception. The first is formalistic reception, which emphasizes routine recitation, memorization, precision in *tajwīd*, and the completion of a daily one-*juz* target. The second is creative reception, in which Qur’ānic reading is understood as a process of *tadabbur* and spiritual transformation. In online discussions, for example, some members relate the verses they read to contemporary human concerns such as environmental crises, work ethics, and social solidarity—reflective approaches that resonate with al-Ghazali’s contextual hermeneutical spirit.

In practice, members of the ODOJ community demonstrate a balance between these two modes of reception. Formalistic reception reinforces a commitment to textual authenticity and ritual discipline, while creative reception revitalizes meaning through practices such as contemplative reflection (*tafakkur*), the writing of recitation journals, and the application of Qur’ānic values in everyday life, including regular charitable giving and moral self-improvement. This dynamic reveals an ongoing negotiation between idealism and lived reality, in which spiritual intimacy and disciplined recitation must be aligned with the challenges of urban life and the influence of social, cultural, and digital forces. Online activities expand the reach of religious outreach (*da’wah*), yet they also carry the risk of fragmenting understanding if not accompanied by deep spiritual reflection.

³² Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. 28-30.

³³ Kholili Hasib and Neneng Uswatun Khasanah, “The Integration of Rationality and Spirituality: Imam Al-Ghazali’s Experience through Ta’lim Rabbani Approach in Acquiring Knowledge,” *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 21, no. 1 (2025): 65–83, <https://doi.org/10.18196/afkaruna.v21i1.25377>.

Within al-Ghazali's hermeneutical framework, this dynamic can be understood as a form of the *living Qur'an*: a process of animating Qur'anic meaning through contemplation, dialogue, and social praxis. The tension between these two modes of reception generates a constructive epistemological dynamic, namely the integration of fidelity to the text (*iltizām bi al-naṣṣ*) with the courage to engage reality through sound reason and human experience (*ta'aqqul wa tajribah insāniyyah*).³⁴ In this sense, the ODOJ community may be viewed as a spiritual laboratory in which al-Ghazali's Qur'anic hermeneutics are enacted within the reflective and dynamic context of urban Muslim society.

These practices become increasingly evident across three principal domains. First, in *tilāwah*, formalistic reception is reflected in the disciplined practice of reciting one *juz'* per day with *tartīl* and strict adherence to *tajwīd*, whereas creative reception understands recitation as a spiritual encounter between the reader and the divine message. Within this domain, some ODOJ members also share recordings of their recitations through social media platforms as a form of religious outreach and inspiration for fellow members. This activity indicates a shift in the function of *tilāwah* from a private devotional act to a public expression of spirituality, thereby expanding its *da'wah* dimension. Second, in *tadabbur*, the creative approach integrates internal context (*mā fi al-Qur'ān*) and external context (*mā haula al-Qur'ān*), as seen when members relate Q. al-Hujurāt:13 to issues of interethnic tolerance in Medan. In this regard, the practice of "daily verse reflection" serves as a primary site of creative reception. Members compose a brief reflective statement based on the verse they have read and discuss it online. For example, when engaging with Q. al-Baqarah:177, several participants interpreted the verse within the framework of contemporary social ethics, linking it to workplace integrity and environmental responsibility. Third, in digital *da'wah*, creative reception emerges through reflective social media content that connects Qur'anic verses with social realities—echoing al-Ghazali's vision that the Qur'an must "descend" into the modern world and serve as a guiding force within human culture. In this digital context, formalistic reception is evident in posts that merely quote verses without commentary, whereas creative reception is expressed through concise narratives that relate Qur'anic teachings to personal experiences, such as stories of individuals motivated to give charity after reading Q. al-Layl:17–18.

The dialectic between formalistic and creative reception within the ODOJ community cannot be understood merely as a technical difference in modes of recitation; rather, it reflects a deeper divergence in epistemological orientation. The formalistic approach is rooted in the *ta'abbudī* paradigm—devotional adherence to the text as an act of worship—whereas the creative approach is grounded in the *tafaqquh* paradigm, which emphasizes deep understanding in order to actualize the values of the *Shari'a*. These paradigms are not mutually exclusive; instead, they are complementary. Fidelity to the *lafz* preserves the sanctity of revelation, while rational reflection animates its *maqāṣid*—the moral and social objectives of Islamic law.³⁵

³⁴ Surizkika, "Educational Qualifications Of Du'at: An Analysis Of Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1917-1996) Thought."

³⁵ Sayyid Muhammad Yunus Gilani and Tazul Islam, "Approaches to Integration of Knowledge: A Study of Al-Ghazali And Alwani's Views," *Journal of Islam in Asia* 15, no. 2 (2018): 1689–99.

Based on these findings, this study underscores the importance of a holistic approach that integrates formalistic rigor, interpretive creativity, and lived social contexts in fostering meaningful and sustainable Qur'anic literacy in the digital age. This model of reception highlights the interconnection between classical texts and contemporary practices, thereby creating a spiritual-digital ecosystem that remains relevant for modern Muslim communities.³⁶

The balance between formalistic and creative approaches constitutes a key foundation for the sustainability of Qur'anic spirituality in the modern era. Muhammad al-Ghazali's thought provides an essential framework for this synthesis by affirming reverence for the sacred text through accurate recitation and disciplined worship, while simultaneously enlivening it through rational reflection and the application of moral values. Formalistic reception functions to preserve the purity of form and tradition, whereas creative reception ensures the continued relevance of meaning within contemporary contexts. For the One Day One Juz (ODOJ) community, the integration of these two modes generates a model of Qur'anic praxis that harmonizes *tilāwah* as an act of worship, *tadabbur* as intellectual reflection, and digital *da'wah* as a form of social transformation. Al-Ghazali's rational and *maqāṣid*-oriented approach exemplifies a pattern of creative reception directed toward the realization of communal benefit (*maṣlahah*).³⁷ Within the ODOJ context, this pattern is manifested through digital *tadabbur* activities that connect Qur'anic recitation with contemporary social issues such as digital ethics, humanitarian solidarity, and environmental awareness.

Within an urban and digitally mediated society such as Medan, the model of reception inspired by al-Ghazali and enacted by the ODOJ community demonstrates that Qur'anic spirituality is capable of adapting to technological change without losing its essential character. The integration of tradition and innovation creates new religious spaces in which Qur'anic recitation is no longer confined to mosques, but is also present in digital platforms, workplaces, and public spheres. This dynamic distinction between formalistic reception—limited to recitation—and creative reception—characterized by reflective *tadabbur*—defines the lived experience of the ODOJ community in Medan. When synthesized, these two forms of reception produce a constructive epistemological dynamic that closely reflects al-Ghazali's hermeneutical vision.³⁸

The findings indicate that the reception of Muhammad al-Ghazali's thought among members of the One Day One Juz (ODOJ) community operates within three principal forms—literal, reflective, and praxis-oriented—though their manifestations vary across individual members. When examined in relation to al-Ghazali's mental-spiritual framework

³⁶ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 63-67.

³⁷ A. Amrulloh, "HADIS SEBAGAI SUMBER HUKUM ISLAM (Studi Metode Komparasi-Konfrontatif Hadis-Al- Qur'an Perspektif Muhammad Al-Ghazali Dan Yusuf Al-Qaradawi)," *Ahkam: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 3, no. 2 (2015): 287-310, <https://doi.org/10.21274/ahkam.2015.3.2.287-310>.

³⁸ Mohd Akil Muhamed Ali et al., "Hermeneutics in the Eye of Al Ghazali," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 4 (2015): 39-46, <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n4s2p39>; Habib, "Al-Ghazālī's Qur'anic Sufi Hermeneutics: Case Study on the Story of Abraham in Search of God," *KALAM* 15, no. 02 (2021): 121-44, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.24042/klm.v15i2.9523>.

as articulated in *Kayfa Nata 'āmal ma 'a al-Qur'ān*, these findings reveal a noticeable gap between the ideal of Qur'anic engagement—one that emphasizes deep *tadabbur* and moral transformation—and the actual practices of digital recitation groups, which tend to prioritize the completion of daily *juz'* targets. This tendency aligns with Anna M. Gade's (2004) observation that contemporary Qur'anic recitation communities in Indonesia often position *tilāwah* as a disciplinary practice and a marker of religious identity, without necessarily being accompanied by sustained interpretive depth. This dynamic helps explain the dominance of literal reception: the ODOJ system, which relies on daily progress reporting, structurally privileges quantitative achievement as the primary indicator of success.

From the perspective of reception theory as developed by Jauss and Iser, the predominance of literal reception among ODOJ members demonstrates how the community's horizon of expectations plays a decisive role in shaping patterns of reading. The one-*juz'*-per-day target fosters a performative religious culture that encourages ritual compliance, yet does not always create sufficient space for the elaboration of meaning. Viewed through the analytical frameworks of Graham (1987) and Rippin (1999), this phenomenon may be understood as a reinforcement of the Qur'anic oral tradition that remains largely grounded in phonetic performance and repetitive practice. Consequently, the prevalence of literal reception should not be attributed to a lack of interpretive capacity among members, but rather to the social and communal structure of ODOJ itself, which emphasizes collective participation, rhythmic discipline, and the consistency of daily recitation.

Meanwhile, the emergence of reflective reception is evident among members who actively engage in independent *tadabbur*, consult Qur'anic translations, and compose personal reflective notes. This pattern closely approximates al-Ghazali's ideal of integrating text and meaning. Such a phenomenon can be explained through Bourdieu's theory of social practice, which suggests that individuals possessing greater religious cultural capital—such as formal religious education, prior participation in study circles, or established habits of *tadabbur*—are better positioned to develop a reflective relationship with the sacred text. Dina and Zinira's (2024) study on *Ngaji on the Street* within the ODOJ community in Wonosobo similarly found that members with higher levels of religious literacy tended to cultivate more contemplative modes of Qur'anic reading. Thus, reflective reception emerges not merely as a product of community structure, but as the outcome of members' religious habitus and their exposure to interpretive discourses.

Praxis-oriented reception represents the highest stage of reception, yet it was observed among a relatively small group of participants. This finding is consistent with Amin and Nurhayat (2020), who argue that praxis-oriented reception occurs only when Qur'anic reading is transformed into stable moral consciousness. Within the ODOJ context, such transformation is evident among members who adopt specific verses as guiding principles for behavioral change, such as maintaining regular charitable practices or improving family relationships. Why, then, does this form of reception not emerge more widely? Field findings suggest that most ODOJ activities take place within digital spaces that are inherently fragmented, fast-paced, and limited in their capacity to facilitate sustained, in-depth dialogue. As a result, the internalization of Qur'anic values is less robust

than in offline communities, where intensive spiritual mentoring and embodied interaction are more readily available.

This study essentially reinforces previous research on the relevance and influence of al-Ghazali's thought in Indonesia. Earlier studies have consistently demonstrated that al-Ghazali's intellectual legacy—particularly in the domains of Sufism and Islamic education—has played a significant role in shaping the spirituality, moral outlook, and religious practices of Indonesian Muslim society. His works, most notably *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, have long served as foundational references in both formal and non-formal educational settings, emphasizing a balanced integration of cognitive dimensions (memorization and understanding), psychomotor dimensions (ritual practice), and affective dimensions (the internalization of values in everyday life).³⁹ The present findings extend this body of scholarship by highlighting the role of digital media in sustaining consistent Qur'anic recitation and reflective engagement, as well as in developing a reception-practice model of *tilāwah* grounded in al-Ghazali's thought within digital religious communities.⁴⁰ This contribution aligns with contemporary trends that stress the importance of adapting classical Islamic values to the conditions of the digital age. Recent studies likewise suggest that digitalization enhances access, interaction, and the internalization of spiritual values, while simultaneously posing challenges to the preservation of interpretive depth and traditional forms of religious authority. Accordingly, this study does not challenge earlier findings; rather, it strengthens and expands them by introducing a digital dimension and a more contextualized model of reception. In doing so, it demonstrates that al-Ghazali's thought remains highly relevant and can be effectively integrated into the formation of contemporary religious practices in Indonesia.

C. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Muhammad al-Ghazali's thought—particularly as articulated in *Kayfa Nata 'āmal ma 'a al-Qur'ān*—fosters spiritual intimacy and the cultivation of righteous conduct through the practice of daily Qur'anic recitation within the One Day One Juz (ODOJ) community in Medan. The community's reception of al-Ghazali's teachings unfolds in three principal forms. First, literal reception, which emphasizes Qur'anic recitation and pronunciation, with members focusing on achieving the one-*juz*-per-day target and maintaining accuracy in *tajwīd* through daily reporting. Second, reflective reception, which prioritizes understanding meaning, as members engage in contemplation (*tafakkur*), record reflections, and keep *tilāwah* journals to internalize Qur'anic messages.

³⁹ Hajam et al., "The Contribution of Al-Ghazali in Promoting Islamic Moderate Thought in Indonesia," *Sunan Kalijaga: International Journal of Islamic Civilization* 3, no. 2 (2020): 133–59; Mariyo, "Konsep Pemikiran Imam Al Ghazali Dalam Relevansi Pola Pendidikan Islam Indonesia Dalam Era Globalisasi," *Journal on Education* 05, no. 04 (2023): 13045–56; T Saputra and A Wahid, "AL-GHAZALI DAN PEMIKIRANNYA TENTANG PENDIDIKAN TASAWUF," *ILJ: Islamic Learning Journal* 8, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54437/iljislamiclearningjournal.v1i4.1206>.

⁴⁰ Mursalat, "Reviving the Legacy of Classical Islamic Scholars in the Digital Era: A Study on Ulil Abshar Abdalla's Ngaji Tasawuf Online," *Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2025); Cindenia Puspasari, Samhudi, and Darmadi, "Religion and the Digital Era 5.0: The Existence of Religion among Millennials and Generation Z," *At-Tarbawi: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial Dan Kebudayaan* 12, no. 1 (2025): 182–201, <https://doi.org/10.32505/tarbawi.v12i1.10868>; Mauloeddin Afna, "Exploring Imam Al-Ghazali's Teachings," *Digital Muslim Review* 1, no. 1 (2023): 1–17.

Third, praxis-oriented reception, which stresses the implementation of Qur'anic values in social life, including regular charitable giving, moral self-improvement, and positive behavioral change. Collectively, these forms of reception are active and contextual, shaped by social, cultural, and digital factors that support consistency in recitation and reflection. The findings offer both conceptual and theoretical contributions by developing a reception-practice model of *tilāwah* grounded in al-Ghazali's thought within a digital community context, while also demonstrating the model's potential application for advancing contemporary Qur'anic literacy. Accordingly, this study affirms that classical Islamic thought remains relevant and can be effectively integrated into modern religious movements in Indonesia, fostering spiritual discipline, the internalization of religious values, and consistent, meaningful religious practice in everyday life.

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