

Reading Anxiety as a Predictor of Qur'anic Tahsin Ability among Junior High School Students in Ponorogo

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Abstract

This study examined reading anxiety as a predictor of Qur'anic tahsin ability among junior high school students in Ponorogo. The problem addressed was whether fear, nervousness, and tension during oral Qur'anic reading are associated with lower accuracy in tahsin performance. A quantitative cross-sectional approach using simple linear regression was employed; therefore, the findings are interpreted as predictive and associative rather than causal. The sample consisted of 244 students from two public junior secondary schools in Ponorogo. Reading anxiety was measured using a 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire, while Qur'anic tahsin ability was assessed through a standardized oral reading test using a tahsin rubric. The reading anxiety instrument showed excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.970), corrected item-total correlations ranging from 0.745 to 0.798, and a dominant factor structure, as supported by KMO = 0.983 and Bartlett's test ($p < 0.001$). Simple regression showed that reading anxiety negatively predicted Qur'anic tahsin ability ($B = -0.259$, $t = -17.645$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.563$). Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples confirmed the negative coefficient, with a 95% CI of [-0.307, -0.216]. Spearman correlation also showed a strong negative monotonic association, $\rho = -0.909$, $p < 0.001$. These findings indicate that emotionally safe correction and supportive oral reading practice should accompany tajwid accuracy in tahsin learning.

Keywords: reading anxiety; Qur'anic tahsin; Qur'anic reading; Islamic education; predictive association.

Introduction

Qur'anic reading competence occupies a central place in Islamic education because it shapes how Muslim students encounter the sacred text in daily worship, school learning, and religious formation. In this article, Tahsin is understood as a disciplined effort to improve the quality of Qur'anic recitation. It concerns more than the recognition of Arabic letters. Students are expected to control makharij al-huruf, sifaat al-huruf, tajwid accuracy, mad, tartil fluency, waqf, and ibtida' as interrelated dimensions of oral performance. Ibn al-Jazari (2006) located the correctness of articulation and the rights of letters at the core of tajwid, while Annuri (2016) described tahsin as a guided process of correcting and refining recitation through practice, listening, and teacher feedback. This performance-based character explains why Qur'anic reading ability should be examined through observable recitation rather than through declarative knowledge of rules alone.

The Indonesian context broadens this issue to a wider educational significance. The Ministry of Religious Affairs reported that the 2023 national Qur'anic literacy index reached 66.038, yet only 44.57 percent of respondents were able to read the Qur'an fluently according to tajwid (Indonesia, 2023). The distance between basic letter recognition and accurate tajwid-based reading shows that schools still need structured attention to tahsin. Ponorogo provides a



distinctive local setting because Peraturan Bupati Ponorogo Nomor 37 Tahun 2022 establishes the implementation of religious-based education in basic education, including its functions, learning achievement, financing, community participation, supervision, and reporting (Ponorogo, 2022). Within this policy environment, SMPN 2 Babadan and SMPN 1 Jenangan are suitable sites for examining tahsin because they represent public junior secondary schools where Qur'anic learning is connected to local expectations for religious-based education.

Reading anxiety is a psychological condition marked by fear, worry, nervousness, avoidance, and bodily tension during reading tasks. In reading research, Edwards et al. (2023) treated reading anxiety as a reading-specific construct that can be separated from general and social anxiety, with items that include discomfort when reading aloud and fear of being corrected after a mistake. This formulation is useful for Qur'anic tahsin because students do not read silently for private comprehension; they often read aloud, listen to models, receive direct correction, and perform in front of teachers or peers. Reading anxiety in this article, therefore, refers to anxiety during Qur'anic reading and tahsin learning. It includes fear of mispronouncing letters, worry about tajwid errors, nervousness when taking a reading turn, discomfort when peers listen, and reluctance to continue after teacher correction.

Theoretically, reading anxiety may influence Tahsin's ability through attention, pronunciation control, and willingness to practice. Anxiety can consume working attention, disrupt oral fluency, and reduce the learner's readiness to process feedback. In language education, Toyama and Yamazaki (2021) summarized foreign language anxiety as a negative emotional reaction that can interfere with thought, communication, and learning. Li (2022) also found, through a meta-analysis, that foreign-language reading anxiety was moderately associated with reading performance. In tahsin, this mechanism can be sharper because accurate recitation requires auditory focus, stable breathing, precise movement of the speech organs, and repeated correction of small errors. A student who fears being corrected may avoid reading aloud, shorten practice time, or lose concentration exactly when makhraj and tajwid require careful attention.

Previous studies on Qur'anic reading have generally emphasized teaching methods, program implementation, and instructional support. Fitriani and Hayati (2020) reported that the tahsin method had a significant effect on high school students' Qur'anic reading ability, especially in makharij al-huruf and tajwid rules. Wulandari (2024) showed that tahsin learning at Madrasah Aliyah involved rules of recitation, pronunciation practice, teacher expertise, learning materials, and interactive techniques to improve students' ability to read the Qur'an. A more recent study on tahsin-based learning in primary school found that talaqqi, level-based grouping, and media support improved reading fluency, tajwid accuracy, and confidence (Mawardi et al., 2025). These studies confirm that tahsin develops through structured pedagogy, yet they rarely place students' emotional experience during oral reading at the center of the analysis.

Research on reading anxiety has developed more strongly in general reading and second-language learning. Hamada and Takaki (2022) used the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale to identify learners likely to struggle or succeed in second-language classrooms, indicating that reading anxiety can inform pedagogical screening. Edwards et al. (2023) demonstrated that reading anxiety was related to reading fluency, reading self-concept, perceived reading ability, reading enjoyment, and reading frequency. Li's (2022) meta-analysis identified reading performance as one of the main correlates of foreign language reading anxiety. These findings

are valuable, yet their dominant contexts differ from Qur'anic tahsin, where the reading material is sacred, the script is Arabic, the performance is oral, and correction often concerns phonetic precision rather than comprehension alone.

This study responds to a specific gap in Islamic education research. Studies on Qur'anic reading ability often explain student outcomes in terms of tahsin methods, teacher competence, learning media, *talaqqi*, or institutional programs. Studies on reading anxiety tend to focus on language classrooms, academic reading, or foreign language comprehension. Limited attention has been given to reading anxiety as a psychological predictor of Qur'anic tahsin ability among junior high school students, particularly in Ponorogo, where religious-based education has formal local policy support. Examining this relationship can clarify whether emotional barriers during oral Qur'anic reading should be treated as part of tahsin pedagogy rather than as a separate personal issue.

The novelty of this article lies in its quantitative focus on reading anxiety as a predictor of Qur'anic tahsin ability in two public junior secondary schools in Ponorogo. The contribution is both practical and conceptual. If reading anxiety is empirically associated with tahsin performance, teachers may need to design learning situations that reduce fear of correction, normalize gradual improvement, and encourage students to read aloud without humiliation. Such a perspective can enrich student-centered tahsin pedagogy by placing emotional safety alongside *tajwid* accuracy and repeated practice. Therefore, this study aimed to examine whether reading anxiety negatively predicts Qur'anic tahsin ability among students at SMPN 2 Babadan and SMPN 1 Jenangan, Ponorogo. Based on the theoretical assumption that anxiety may interfere with oral reading fluency, pronunciation control, and students' willingness to receive corrective feedback, this study hypothesized that reading anxiety would be negatively predictive of students' Qur'anic tahsin ability.

Method

This study used a quantitative cross-sectional design with a simple linear regression. Quantitative research is appropriate when variables are measured numerically, and the analysis is directed toward testing a proposed relationship; Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe this approach as suitable for examining measurable associations among variables. The design was selected because the model involved one predictor, reading anxiety, and one outcome variable, Qur'anic tahsin ability. Simple linear regression was used to assess whether reading anxiety predicted students' tahsin scores, a procedure that Field (2018) describes as appropriate when a study examines the predictive role of a single continuous independent variable on a continuous dependent variable. Because the data were collected at one point in time and no experimental manipulation was conducted, the analysis was not intended to establish causal effects.

The research was conducted at SMPN 2 Babadan and SMPN 1 Jenangan, Ponorogo, Indonesia. These two public junior secondary schools were selected because Qur'anic tahsin learning was implemented in their instructional activities and because they represented the school context in which the study was situated. The accessible population consisted of 624 students who participated in tahsin learning across the two schools. The sampling frame was constructed from school rosters and preliminary reading-ability records available before the main data collection. Following the principle that a sample should represent the structure of its accessible population,

as Cohen et al. (2018) emphasize in educational research, this study used proportionate stratified random sampling based on school origin and preliminary reading ability category.

The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error: $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$, where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the margin of error. With $N = 624$ and $e = 0.05$, the calculation produced 244 students. The sample was then distributed proportionally across the two schools: 182 students from SMPN 1 Jenangan and 62 students from SMPN 2 Babadan. Random selection was conducted within the strata. The tahsin score analyzed in this study was obtained after respondents had been selected, and the reading anxiety score was not used as a sampling criterion. Thus, preliminary reading-ability categories were used only to maintain representation within the sampling frame, not to select students based on the outcome score.

The independent variable in this study was reading anxiety. Operationally, reading anxiety referred to students' fear, worry, nervousness, avoidance, or bodily tension during Qur'anic reading and tahsin learning. The construct was limited to anxiety experienced when students read the Qur'an aloud, received teacher correction, were evaluated, or were listened to by peers. The dependent variable was Qur'anic tahsin ability, which referred to students' ability to read the Qur'an according to tahsin principles, including makharij al-huruf, sifaat al-huruf, tajwid accuracy, mad, reading fluency, waqf, and ibtida'. These definitions were used to ensure that both variables could be measured consistently in the quantitative model.

Reading anxiety was measured using a 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire. The response scale ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree. The questionnaire was developed from five conceptual domains: fear of reading aloud, fear of tajwid and makhraj errors, anxiety about teacher correction, peer evaluation anxiety, and avoidance or concentration disruption. Example item content included fear of being asked to read aloud, worry about making tajwid or makhraj mistakes, discomfort when corrected by the teacher, embarrassment when peers listened, and difficulty concentrating during Qur'anic reading. The construction of a psychological scale requires that each item represent the intended construct clearly, and DeVellis and Thorpe (2021) note that scale items should be developed from explicit theoretical dimensions rather than from broad impressions alone.

Qur'anic tahsin ability was measured through a standardized oral Qur'anic reading test using a tahsin assessment rubric. All students read the same passage, Surah Al-Baqarah verses 32-34, to control for the passage's difficulty across participants. The rubric covered seven components: makharij al-huruf, sifaat al-huruf, tajwid accuracy, mad, reading fluency, waqf, and ibtida'. Each component was scored on a 0-100 performance scale, and the final tahsin score was calculated as the average of the component scores. For SPSS entry, the score was recorded as a multiplied-by-ten value and then divided by ten for reporting in the article. The assessment was conducted by one trained rater using the same rubric and instructions for all participants. The rater did not use students' reading anxiety scores when scoring Tahsin's performance. Inter-rater reliability was not calculated because only one rater assessed the oral reading performance; this point is acknowledged as a methodological limitation.

The reading anxiety questionnaire was assessed for reliability, item discrimination, and factorability before the main interpretation of the data. Reliability was examined using Cronbach's Alpha, with coefficients of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable for research use; Pallant (2020)

uses this threshold as a practical standard for internal consistency in social science instruments. Corrected item-total correlation and Cronbach's Alpha if the item was deleted were examined to assess item discrimination and possible redundancy. Exploratory factor analysis was also conducted to evaluate whether a dominant reading-anxiety factor empirically supported the items. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to assess factorability before extraction.

Data collection was conducted in several stages. The researcher first obtained permission from the schools and prepared the questionnaire, Tahsin test materials, and scoring rubric. Students then completed the reading anxiety questionnaire, followed by the standardized oral Qur'anic reading test. Their tahsin performance was scored using the rubric, yielding a reading anxiety score and a tahsin ability score for each student. Student identities were treated confidentially, and the dataset was prepared for statistical analysis without displaying personal identifiers.

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. The analysis began with reliability testing, corrected item-total correlation, and exploratory factor analysis for the reading anxiety instrument. Descriptive statistics were then calculated to obtain the minimum score, maximum score, mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis for reading anxiety and Qur'anic tahsin ability. Before regression analysis, residual normality was examined using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, supported by visual inspection of the histogram and Normal P-P Plot of standardized residuals. Linearity was examined to determine whether the relationship was suitable for a linear model, and a scatterplot of standardized predicted values and standardized residuals was reviewed. Because the normality and linearity diagnostics were not fully ideal, additional analyses were conducted, including Spearman correlation, bootstrapped regression with 5,000 resamples, quadratic regression, ceiling-effect checks, and influence diagnostics using Cook's Distance, leverage values, and studentized deleted residuals.

The main linear model was $Y = a + bX + e$. In this model, Y represented Qur'anic tahsin ability, X represented reading anxiety, a represented the constant, b represented the regression coefficient, and e represented the error term. The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 significance level. The regression coefficient, significance value, R-square, and sensitivity analyses were used to interpret the direction, statistical evidence, and robustness of the predictive association. The null hypothesis stated that reading anxiety did not significantly predict students' Qur'anic tahsin ability, while the alternative hypothesis stated that reading anxiety negatively predicted students' Qur'anic tahsin ability.

Discussion and Results

Instrument Reliability, Item Redundancy, and Factor Structure

The 20-item reading anxiety questionnaire showed excellent internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha was 0.970, and the same value was obtained for the standardized items. Corrected item-total correlations ranged from 0.745 to 0.798, indicating that all items contributed positively to the total score. Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted ranged only from 0.968 to 0.969, so deleting any single item would not meaningfully improve reliability. The inter-item correlation matrix showed moderate-to-strong positive correlations among items, ranging from 0.521 to 0.677. This pattern supports coherence among the items, but it also confirms the reviewer's concern that the

very high Alpha may reflect item overlap or redundancy. For this reason, the scale was retained for the present analysis, while possible item reduction is recommended for future instrument refinement.

Table 1. Reliability, Item Redundancy, and Factor Analysis of the Reading Anxiety Instrument

Analysis	Indicator	Result	Interpretation
Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	0.970	Excellent internal consistency
Item discrimination	Corrected item-total correlation	0.745-0.798	All items contributed positively
Item redundancy	Alpha if item deleted	0.968-0.969	No item deletion improved reliability meaningfully
Inter-item correlation	Approximate range	0.521-0.677	Moderate-to-strong item overlap
Factorability	KMO and Bartlett's test	KMO = 0.983; $\chi^2(190)$ = 3865.191; $p < 0.001$	Data suitable for factor analysis
Factor structure	Dominant component	Eigenvalue = 12.727; variance = 63.637%; loading = 0.756-0.820	A dominant reading-anxiety factor was supported

Exploratory factor analysis further supported the use of the total reading anxiety score. The KMO value of 0.983 indicated excellent sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(190) = 3865.191$, $p < 0.001$). The first component had an eigenvalue of 12.727 and explained 63.637% of the variance, while all item loadings were high, ranging from 0.756 to 0.820. Therefore, the five proposed domains were treated as conceptual domains of reading anxiety rather than as empirically separate subscales in the regression model.

Descriptive Statistics and Ceiling Effect

The descriptive statistics provided an initial picture of the two variables. Reading anxiety ranged from a minimum of 24 to a maximum of 95, with a mean of 60.64 and a standard deviation of 18.895. This wide range showed that the respondents varied considerably in the anxiety they experienced during Qur'anic reading and tahsin learning. Qur'anic tahsin ability had a minimum score of 40.00 and a maximum score of 97.60, with a mean of 85.17 and a standard deviation of 6.520. The mean score suggested that students' tahsin performance was generally high, although the minimum score indicated that some students still required instructional support.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading Anxiety	244	24	95	60.64	18.895
Qur'anic Tahsin Ability	244	40.00	97.60	85.17	6.520

A ceiling-effect check was conducted because the tahsin mean was relatively high. No participant reached the theoretical maximum score of 100 because the highest observed score was 97.60. However, the tahsin score distribution was negatively skewed (skewness = -2.582) with high kurtosis (kurtosis = 12.495), indicating upper-tail concentration. This means the result

should be interpreted with the understanding that many students had relatively high tahsin scores, even though no exact maximum score ceiling was found.

Assumption Testing

The normality of the unstandardized residuals was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk procedures. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic was 0.154 with $p < 0.001$, while the Shapiro-Wilk statistic was 0.761 with $p < 0.001$. These results indicated that the residuals were not normally distributed. This assumption issue was not ignored because Field (2018) notes that regression interpretation should consider residual diagnostics rather than relying solely on coefficients and p-values. For this reason, sensitivity analyses were added after the main regression result.

Table 3. Residual Normality Test

Test	Statistic	df	Sig.	Interpretation
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.154	244	< 0.001	Non-normal residuals
Shapiro-Wilk	0.761	244	< 0.001	Non-normal residuals

The graphical inspection supports the statistical tests and is presented in Figures 1-3. The histogram showed that most standardized residuals were concentrated around the center, but several extreme negative residuals were visible. The Normal P-P Plot also showed deviations from the diagonal line, especially at the lower and upper parts of the distribution. The residual scatterplot did not show a fully random distribution, and several points appeared to be far from the main cluster. These patterns suggested that the regression result should be interpreted with caution because the normality assumption and residual pattern were not ideal.

Figure 1. Histogram of Regression Standardized Residual

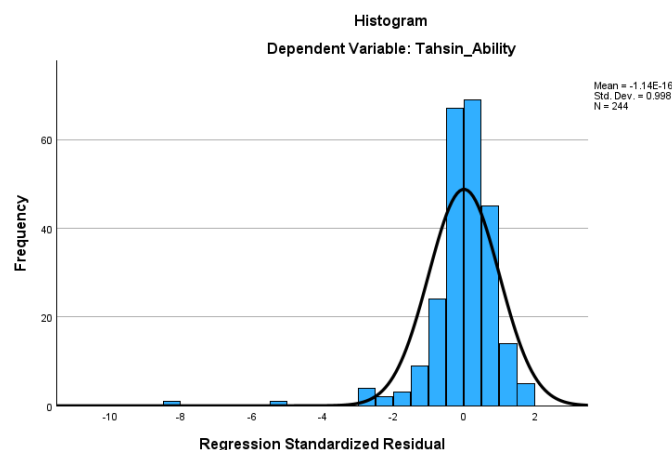


Figure 2. Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

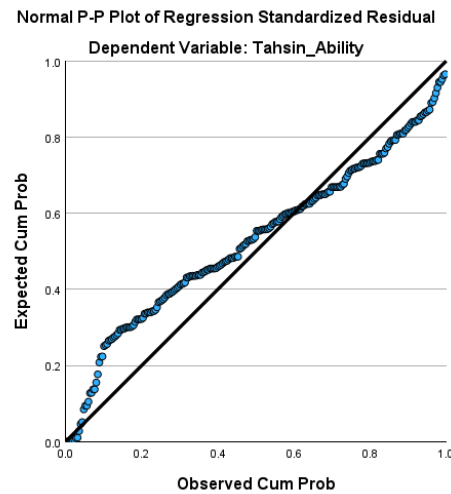
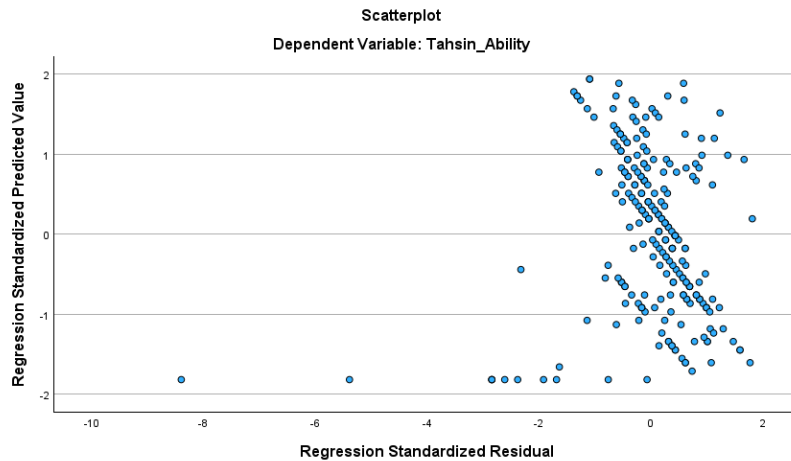


Figure 3. Scatterplot of Standardized Residual and Standardized Predicted Value



The linearity test showed that the linear component of the relationship between reading anxiety and Qur'anic tahsin ability was statistically significant, $F = 551.832$, $p < 0.001$. However, the deviation from linearity was also significant, $F = 3.838$, $p < 0.001$. This means that the relationship showed a clear linear trend, while some non-linear variation remained in the data. The simple regression model was retained because the study tested the main predictive tendency between one independent variable and one dependent variable. Still, the significant deviation from linearity was addressed by conducting a quadratic regression as a sensitivity analysis.

Table 4. Linearity Test

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Combined	8495.737	66	128.723	12.141	< 0.001
Linearity	5850.673	1	5850.673	551.832	< 0.001
Deviation from Linearity	2645.064	65	40.693	3.838	< 0.001
Within Groups	1876.603	177	10.602	-	-
Total	10372.340	243	-	-	-

Reading Anxiety as a Predictor of Qur'anic Tahsin Ability

The simple linear regression analysis showed a strong negative predictive association between reading anxiety and Qur'anic tahsin ability. The model summary produced $R = 0.750$, $R^2 = 0.563$, and Adjusted $R^2 = 0.561$. Thus, reading anxiety explained 56.3% of the variance in students' Qur'anic tahsin ability. The remaining 43.7% may be attributable to variables outside the model, such as prior Qur'anic learning experience, instructional method, teacher feedback, home religious environment, motivation, self-efficacy, frequency of practice, and classroom climate.

Table 5. Simple Linear Regression Model Summary and ANOVA

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	F(1, 242)	Sig.
0.750	0.563	0.561	4.321	311.346	< 0.001

The ANOVA result confirmed that the regression model was statistically meaningful, $F(1, 242) = 311.346$, $p < 0.001$. The coefficient table showed that reading anxiety had an unstandardized coefficient of $B = -0.259$, $SE = 0.015$, standardized Beta = -0.750 , $t = -17.645$, $p < 0.001$, with a 95% confidence interval from -0.288 to -0.230 . The negative coefficient indicated that higher reading anxiety predicted lower Qur'anic tahsin ability within this sample.

Table 6. Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	95% CI for B
Constant	100.869	0.932	-	108.272	< 0.001	[99.033, 102.704]
Reading Anxiety	-0.259	0.015	-0.750	-17.645	< 0.001	[-0.288, -0.230]

The regression equation was $Y = 100.869 - 0.259X$. In this equation, Y represented Qur'anic tahsin ability, and X represented reading anxiety. The equation means that every one-point increase in reading anxiety was associated with a 0.259-point decrease in Qur'anic tahsin ability. Because the p -value was lower than 0.05 and the coefficient was negative, the alternative hypothesis was supported, and the null hypothesis was rejected. The result indicated that reading anxiety had a statistically significant negative predictive association with students' Qur'anic tahsin ability.

Sensitivity and Influence Diagnostics

Because residual normality and linearity were not fully ideal, sensitivity analyses were conducted. Spearman correlation showed a strong negative monotonic association between reading anxiety and Qur'anic tahsin ability, $\rho = -0.909$, $p < 0.001$. Bootstrapped regression with 5,000 resamples also confirmed the stability of the negative coefficient, $B = -0.259$, 95% CI $[-0.307, -0.216]$, $p < 0.001$. These additional analyses strengthened the interpretation that the main result was robust as a predictive association, although not as evidence of a causal effect.

The quadratic regression model showed a higher R^2 of 0.624, $F(2, 241) = 200.399$, $p < 0.001$. In this model, the centered reading anxiety term remained negative, $B = -0.256$, $p < 0.001$, and the squared term was also significant, $B = -0.0045$, $p < 0.001$. This result supported the earlier linearity test by showing that the relationship contained a nonlinear component.

Therefore, the simple linear coefficient should be understood as the main overall tendency. At the same time, the quadratic result indicates that the negative association may become stronger at higher levels of reading anxiety.

Influence diagnostics also helped identify whether a small number of cases drove the result. Cook's Distance reached a maximum of 0.647, below the common serious threshold of 1.000, although 14 cases exceeded the screening threshold of $4/n = 0.0164$. The maximum centered leverage value was 0.015, and no case exceeded the stricter leverage threshold of 0.0246. Studentized deleted residuals ranged from -10.079 to 1.838, and three cases exceeded the absolute value of 3. These cases were inspected and retained because they represented valid field observations rather than data-entry errors.

Table 7. Sensitivity Analysis and Influence Diagnostics

Analysis	Criterion	Result	Interpretation
Spearman correlation	rho	-0.909; $p < 0.001$	Strong negative monotonic association
Bootstrap regression	5,000 resamples	$B = -0.259$; 95% CI [-0.307, -0.216]; $p < 0.001$	Negative coefficient remained stable
Quadratic regression	Model fit	$R^2 = 0.624$; $F(2, 241) = 200.399$; $p < 0.001$	Nonlinear component was present
Quadratic term	RA_C ²	$B = -0.0045$; $p < 0.001$	Relationship was not fully linear
Cook's Distance	Max and screening	Max = 0.647; 14 cases $> 4/n$ (0.0164)	No case exceeded the serious threshold of 1.000
Leverage	Max and threshold	Max = 0.015; 0 cases > 0.0246	No high-leverage case by strict threshold
Studentized deleted residual	Extreme residuals	Min = -10.079; max = 1.838; 3 cases $ SDR > 3$	Extreme residual cases were inspected and retained

Discussion

The main finding indicates that reading anxiety was a strong negative predictor of Qur'anic tahsin ability among junior high school students in Ponorogo. This pattern is conceptually plausible because reading anxiety involves worry, tension, fear of mistakes, and apprehension during reading-related tasks. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) frame language anxiety as a cluster of self-perceptions and emotions tied to classroom language performance, and this concept helps explain why students may experience Qur'anic reading aloud as an evaluative act rather than a purely technical exercise. In tahsin lessons, the student reads with the awareness that the teacher can correct makhraj, tajwid, fluency, and stopping points immediately. The wording of this finding is intentionally predictive and associational because the cross-sectional design cannot establish causality.

The negative coefficient can also be interpreted through the cognitive-interference mechanism of anxiety. Anxiety consumes attentional resources that should be directed to decoding, pronunciation, memory retrieval, and performance monitoring. Eysenck, Derakshan, Santos, and Calvo (2007) explain, through attentional control theory, that anxiety tends to reduce processing efficiency by shifting attention toward worry- and threat-related cues. In the present context, a student who worries about being corrected may allocate less attention to makharij al-huruf, sifaat al-huruf, mad length, or waqf and ibtida'. The result therefore suggests that emotional

tension is linked with lower precision in tahsin performance, although the direction of causality should be tested in future longitudinal or experimental studies.

Recent reading-anxiety studies support this interpretation. Chan, Yeung, and Chung (2025) found that foreign-language reading anxiety predicted English word reading among children at risk of English-learning difficulties after accounting for cognitive factors. Dang (2024) reported a negative correlation between foreign-language reading anxiety and reading strategy use, indicating that anxious readers tend to use fewer strategies during reading. Zheng (2024) also showed that affective support during reading practice could reduce foreign language reading anxiety among secondary school learners, even though performance gains were more complex. These studies do not directly examine Qur'anic reading, yet they help explain why anxiety may weaken oral reading performance on tasks requiring concentration, strategy, and confidence.

The Qur'anic tahsin context gives the finding a distinctive pedagogical meaning. Tahsin is a corrective and performative learning process in which students listen, imitate, read aloud, receive feedback, and repeat the reading until it approaches the rules of tajwid. Shabrina, Chaeruman, and Tarjiah (2021) describe tahsin learning as a process that requires careful attention to letter pronunciation and adherence to established tajwid rules. Aini and Mahariah (2025) also found that structured tahsin-based learning supported Qur'anic reading fluency, tajwid accuracy, makhraj mastery, and student confidence. These studies align with the present finding because students with lower anxiety are more likely to participate in the corrective cycle that tahsin requires.

The finding also resonates with research on Qur'anic reading pedagogy in public school settings. Fauji, Fahyuni, Muhid, and Fahmawati (2020) showed that child-friendly methods were associated with better Qur'anic reading ability among junior high school students, including the use of Iqra, Tahqiq, Talaqqi Mushafahah, and active student recitation. This supports the pedagogical implication of the present study: students' Qur'anic reading development depends on instructional design and the emotional quality of classroom interaction. A technically accurate correction may still be pedagogically weak if it produces embarrassment, avoidance, or fear of reading aloud.

The high value of R Square should be interpreted with caution. The linear model showed that reading anxiety explained 56.3% of the variance in Qur'anic tahsin ability, suggesting that affective experience played a substantial role in this sample. At the same time, residual normality and linearity diagnostics were not fully ideal. The Spearman and bootstrap analyses confirmed the negative association, but the quadratic regression showed that the relationship was not entirely linear. Some learners may retain high tahsin scores despite moderate anxiety because they have stronger prior training, pesantren experience, family support, self-efficacy, or more frequent practice. Others may perform poorly even with moderate anxiety because their basic tajwid foundation is still weak. The presence of extreme residuals also indicates that individual learning histories may influence tahsin outcomes beyond reading anxiety alone.

From an instructional standpoint, the result calls for a tahsin classroom that balances accuracy and emotional safety. Teachers still need to correct tajwid, makhraj, and fluency errors, but the correction should help students understand the next step in improvement rather than make them feel publicly exposed. Feedback can be given with specific guidance, gradual targets, peer sensitivity, and opportunities for repeated reading. This approach is consistent with student-

centered tahsin pedagogy because students are treated as developing readers whose confidence and accuracy grow together. The findings suggest that reducing fear of correction may be one practical route to improving students' Qur'anic tahsin performance.

Conclusion

This study concluded that reading anxiety negatively predicted Qur'anic tahsin ability among junior high school students in Ponorogo. The regression results showed $B = -0.259$, $p < 0.001$, and $R^2 = 0.563$, indicating that higher reading anxiety was associated with lower Qur'anic tahsin scores. In practical terms, every one-point increase in reading anxiety was associated with a 0.259-point decrease in tahsin ability. Spearman correlation and bootstrapped regression supported the robustness of this negative association, while quadratic regression indicated that the relationship was not fully linear. The finding suggests that tahsin instruction should preserve tajwid accuracy while giving serious attention to students' emotional readiness during oral reading. Teachers need to reduce fear of correction, avoid humiliating feedback, normalize gradual improvement, and create a classroom atmosphere where students can read aloud, receive correction, and repeat their recitation without excessive anxiety. Such an approach can help students treat correction as guidance rather than as social exposure.

This conclusion should be read with methodological caution. The cross-sectional design does not allow causal claims, and the residual normality test, deviation from linearity, ceiling tendency of tahsin scores, and extreme residual cases show that the regression result is best understood as a strong overall predictive tendency rather than a complete explanation of all student variation. Inter-rater reliability was also not calculated because Tahsin's performance was scored by one trained rater. Future studies may examine other predictors of tahsin ability, such as previous Qur'anic learning experience, frequency of practice, teacher feedback style, family support, learning motivation, self-efficacy, and school religious culture, preferably using longitudinal, experimental, or multi-rater assessment designs.

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