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The Role of the Environment and Teachers at Al-Bayan Academy for Quranic Education in Fostering Creative Thinking Among Yemeni Community Students in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of the educational environment and teachers at Al-Bayan Academy in fostering creative thinking among Yemeni community students in Malaysia. The study adopted a quantitative case-study approach using a questionnaire administered to a random sample of 39 male and female students from different age groups and educational levels. The data were analyzed using SPSS through frequencies, percentages, weighted means, standard deviations, validity and reliability testing, and relevant statistical procedures. The findings show that the educational environment at the Academy contributes positively to developing students' creative thinking. In particular, 82% of respondents agreed that the number of hours allocated for learning supports the development of creative thinking, while 77% indicated that the Academy's physical and educational setting motivates innovative thinking. However, the administration's role in encouraging creativity received a lower agreement rate of 66.6%, indicating the need for further administrative support and structured creativity-based programs. Regarding the role of teachers, 92.3% of students affirmed that teachers encourage interaction and discussion, reflecting a strong pedagogical foundation for creative thinking. Nevertheless, only 64.1% agreed that teachers directly encourage new ideas and critique them, suggesting a need for more systematic teaching strategies that promote innovation. The study is significant because it highlights the potential of Qur'an memorization circles to move beyond rote learning toward reflective, interactive, and creative learning. It recommends developing the Academy's educational programs, training teachers in creativity-oriented pedagogy, strengthening community collaboration, and providing technological resources to enhance Qur'anic education and foster students' creative-thinking skills.

Keywords: Educational environment, teacher, creative thinking, Al-Bayan Academy, Quranic education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Creative thinking is regarded as a fundamental element in cultivating minds and enhancing human capacities, as it enables individuals to engage with challenges with flexibility and innovation. The Holy Qur'an has emphasized the importance of reflection and contemplation, indicating their role in developing human thought and stimulating creativity. Allah the Exalted says: ((أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ)) (An-Nisa': 82), and He also says: ((وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ)) (Al 'Imran: 191). These verses call for deep contemplation and profound thinking, which strengthens the human capacity for creativity and innovation.

The Holy Qur'an plays a pivotal role in guiding Muslims toward contemplative and creative thinking, as it calls for contemplation of Allah's cosmic signs and the mysteries of creation. Allah the Exalted says: ((أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ، وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ)) (Al-Ghashiyah: 17–18), which urges the human being toward deep thinking and exploring the laws of the universe, thereby contributing to the development of creative skills and the expansion of intellectual horizons.

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Alongside Qur'anic guidance, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was an exemplar in encouraging thinking and contemplation, as he said: (لا تَفَكَّرُوا فِي اللَّهِ، وَلَكِنْ تَفَكَّرُوا فِي خَلْقِهِ) (Narrated by al-Tabarani in *Al-Mu'jam al-Awsat*). This hadith clarifies the importance of contemplating the manifestations of Allah's creation as a means of fostering deep understanding and the capacity for innovation. Through this continuous call to reflection and contemplation, it becomes evident that creative thinking is an integral part of the Islamic approach, wherein the human being is encouraged to research, discover, and develop solutions in non-traditional ways, thereby contributing to the advancement of Islamic societies across various fields.

In this light, recent studies on Islamic education and creative teaching indicate that integrating religious education with reflective and interactive pedagogical approaches can contribute to developing learners' creative-thinking skills. Rashed (2023) argues that Islamic education should revisit creativity and innovation through the Qur'an and Sunnah, emphasizing the Qur'anic methodology that stimulates reflection, analysis, and constructive thinking. Similarly, Aiyetoro, Halabi, and Zakariyah (2024) show that creative teaching in Islamic education helps students move beyond memorization by strengthening thinking skills, decision-making, and problem-solving. These studies support the view that Qur'anic education can contribute to creative and reflective capacities when memorization is accompanied by understanding, dialogue, and meaningful engagement.

Proceeding from this conception, Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education in Malaysia seeks to present an educational model that combines Qur'an memorization with the development of creative-thinking skills. The Academy was established in 2019 in the Malaysian state of Selangor with the aim of meeting the educational and religious needs of the Yemeni community's children, in addition to offering its services to Muslims residing in Malaysia. The Academy adopts a curriculum that combines Qur'an memorization with the teaching of various sciences, with a focus on developing students' personal skills such as critical and creative thinking through an integrated educational environment and a qualified teaching staff. According to the Academy's internal report, the number of students currently enrolled is approximately 150 male and female students, and more than ten male and female memorizers (*huffāz*) have graduated from the Academy in recent years, indicating its active educational role within the Yemeni community in Malaysia (Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education, 2023).

Despite the efforts exerted by Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education in Malaysia to provide an educational environment that combines Qur'anic memorization with the development of students' intellectual, behavioral, and creative abilities, the extent to which this environment actually contributes to fostering creative thinking remains in need of deeper investigation. Qur'anic education institutions, particularly memorization circles, are often perceived as being primarily concerned with repetition, memorization, and mastery of recitation, while giving less attention to the development of higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, imagination, problem-solving, questioning, dialogue, and creativity. This issue becomes more significant in the context of the Yemeni community in Malaysia, where Qur'anic academies do not only serve as institutions for religious instruction, but also as educational and social spaces that help preserve identity, values, and cultural belonging among students living outside their home country.

In such a context, the learning environment and the teacher's pedagogical role become central factors in shaping students' personalities and developing their mental and creative capacities. However, there is still limited empirical evidence on how far the educational environment, administrative practices, teaching methods, and teacher-student interaction at Al-Bayan Academy contribute to nurturing creative thinking among students. The problem of the study, therefore, lies in the need to examine whether the academy's educational environment and the role of its teachers go beyond traditional Qur'anic instruction to actively support creativity, interaction, discussion, and innovative thinking. This study seeks to identify the strengths and limitations of the current educational practices at the academy and to determine the extent to which they contribute to developing students' creative-thinking skills.

The study aims to identify the role of the educational environment at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education in developing students' creative-thinking skills, analyze teachers' roles in guiding and fostering critical and creative thinking within Qur'an memorization circles, and provide practical recommendations to enhance the educational process in these circles. Ultimately, the study seeks to promote a balanced approach that integrates effective Qur'an memorization with the development of students' creative-thinking skills in line with contemporary educational requirements.

2. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This section presents the theoretical foundation of the study by clarifying the concept of creative thinking and its relevance to the educational process. It also highlights how creative thinking contributes to developing students' intellectual abilities, particularly within Qur'an memorization circles.

2.1. Definition of Creative Thinking

Creative thinking is one of the essential higher-order thinking skills required in contemporary education. It refers to the learner's ability to produce new, useful, and meaningful ideas, to approach issues from different perspectives, and to generate solutions that go beyond routine or traditional patterns of thinking. Torrance (1974) defines creative thinking as the ability to produce ideas characterized by fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. Fluency refers to the ability to generate many ideas; flexibility refers to the ability to move between different perspectives or methods of thinking; originality refers to the production of uncommon or new ideas; and elaboration refers to the ability to develop, refine, and organize ideas in a meaningful way. Creative thinking, therefore, is not limited to artistic talent or invention.

In the educational field, it includes the learner's ability to understand information deeply, analyze ideas, connect concepts, ask questions, infer meanings, and apply knowledge in new contexts. De Bono (1992) emphasizes that creative thinking requires a stimulating environment that encourages exploration, inquiry, and freedom of expression. Similarly, Sternberg and Lubart (1995) view creativity as a capacity that develops when individuals are encouraged to think independently and overcome conventional ways of dealing with problems. This means that creative thinking does not emerge automatically, but grows through an educational environment that provides opportunities for participation, dialogue, experimentation, and intellectual engagement.

In the context of Islamic education, creative thinking has a special significance because Islam encourages the use of reason, reflection, contemplation, and observation. The Qur'an repeatedly calls human beings to think, reflect, and examine the signs of Allah in revelation, creation, history, and human experience. This indicates that thinking is not separate from religious education; rather, it is part of the Qur'anic method of building human awareness. Therefore, creative thinking in Islamic education can be understood as a disciplined mental process that enables the learner to reflect on meanings, connect knowledge with values, and produce beneficial ideas within an ethical and faith-based framework. This understanding is particularly important in Qur'an memorization circles. These circles are often associated with repetition, memorization, and mastery of recitation. While these elements are central to Qur'anic education, they should not prevent the development of higher-order thinking skills.

When memorization is accompanied by understanding, reflection, dialogue, interpretation, and application, it can become a foundation for creative thinking rather than a barrier to it. The memorized Qur'anic text provides students with a rich source of meanings, values, examples, and principles that can stimulate intellectual and creative development when teachers guide students to engage with it consciously. Accordingly, creative thinking in Qur'anic education does not mean moving away from memorization or weakening the importance of accuracy in recitation. Rather, it means expanding the educational function of memorization so that students are also trained to understand, reflect, question, discuss, and relate Qur'anic meanings to their lives. This balance is essential because Qur'anic education aims not only to preserve the text, but also to build the learner's mind, character, awareness, and ability to respond wisely to contemporary challenges. This concept is directly connected to the problem of the present study.

The study examines whether the educational environment and teachers at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education in Malaysia contribute only to Qur'an memorization, or whether they also help develop students' creative-thinking skills. Since the Academy serves students from the Yemeni community in Malaysia, its role extends beyond religious instruction to include the preservation of identity, the development of personality, and the preparation of students to interact positively with their social and educational surroundings. Therefore, creative thinking is an important indicator of the Academy's ability to provide a balanced educational model that combines memorization, understanding, reflection, and innovation. For the purpose of this study, creative thinking refers to the students' ability to engage actively in learning through discussion, questioning, interaction, reflection, and the production of new ideas related to their educational and religious experience. It is measured through students' perceptions of the role of the Academy's environment, administration, learning time, physical setting, and teachers' methods in encouraging interaction, discussion, and innovation. This operational understanding allows the study to examine creative thinking not as an abstract concept, but as an educational practice that can be supported or limited by the learning environment and the teacher's pedagogical role.

2.2. The Concept of Creative Thinking in Islamic Education

Within the context of Islamic education, creative thinking is viewed as a mental process that is stimulated through reflection on the Qur'anic verses, contemplation of their meanings, and the ability to connect religious knowledge with intellectual awareness and practical life. Bal Khayr (2024) explains that creative thinking is "a method used to produce the largest possible number of ideas about a particular problem, characterized by intellectual fluency, flexibility, and originality." This definition is consistent with the nature of Qur'anic education when it moves beyond memorization alone toward understanding, reflection, dialogue, and the generation of meanings. Al-Misbahi (2006) notes that collective interaction within Qur'anic circles enhances the capacity

for innovative thinking through dialogue and discussion, as students learn how to connect ideas and infer new meanings. This view is directly related to the findings of the present study, which showed that 92.3% of students affirmed that teachers encourage interaction and discussion. Such a result indicates that Qur'an memorization circles at Al-Bayan Academy are not limited to repetition and memorization, but include interactive practices that may contribute to stimulating students' critical and creative thinking.

The Holy Qur'an encourages reflection and contemplation, as is evident in the verse: "أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ" (An-Nisa': 82). This Qur'anic directive reflects the importance of contemplating religious meanings and concepts, which forms a foundational basis for developing creative thinking in Islamic education. In this regard, the study's findings support the idea that when the teacher encourages discussion and reflection, students are given opportunities to move from passive reception to active engagement with Qur'anic meanings. Creative thinking is also stimulated through reflection on the verses of the Holy Qur'an and contemplation of Allah's creation, as He says: "إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ" (Al 'Imran: 190). This verse highlights the Qur'anic connection between contemplation, awareness, and intellectual activation. Accordingly, the role of the educational environment becomes essential in helping students develop this reflective capacity. This is supported by the study's finding that 82% of students agreed that the time allocated for learning at the academy supports their intellectual development, suggesting that the academy provides a relatively suitable environment for nurturing reflection and creative thinking.

However, the finding that only 64.1% of students believed that teachers directly support innovation indicates that although interaction and discussion are present, there remains a need to strengthen systematic teaching strategies that intentionally develop creativity. This partially confirms what the literature suggests: creative thinking in Islamic education requires not only memorization and discussion, but also structured educational methods that encourage questioning, inference, problem-solving, reflection, and the production of new ideas within a Qur'anic and value-based framework. Thus, the literature on creative thinking in Islamic education supports the findings of this study by showing that Qur'anic education has the potential to develop creative thinking when it is based on reflection, dialogue, and intellectual engagement. At the same time, the results of the study reveal the need for further improvement in teaching practices so that Qur'an memorization circles can achieve a stronger balance between memorization, understanding, contemplation, and the development of students' creative-thinking skills.

2.3. The Role of Religious Education in Developing Creative Thinking

Religious education plays a central role in shaping the learner's intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social personality. In the Islamic educational perspective, education is not limited to transmitting information or preserving religious texts; rather, it aims to build the human being in a comprehensive manner by developing faith, values, understanding, awareness, behavior, and the ability to think soundly.

Therefore, religious education can become an effective field for developing creative thinking when it is presented through methods that encourage reflection, dialogue, questioning, analysis, and connection between knowledge and real life. The Holy Qur'an itself provides a strong foundation for this type of thinking. It repeatedly calls human beings to reflect on revelation, contemplate the signs of creation, consider the lessons of history, and observe the realities of life. These Qur'anic directives indicate that Islamic education is not based on passive reception alone, but on active mental engagement. The learner is encouraged to understand meanings, search for wisdom, derive lessons, and apply guidance in different situations.

Accordingly, creative thinking in religious education does not mean departing from the religious text; rather, it means engaging with the text in a conscious, reflective, and purposeful manner. Qur'an memorization circles have a special position in this regard. Although their primary function is to help students memorize the Qur'an accurately and master recitation, they also have the potential to develop higher-order thinking skills. When memorization is accompanied by understanding, discussion, interpretation, and reflection, it becomes a means of intellectual development as well as religious formation. Students who memorize Qur'anic verses and are guided to reflect on their meanings can develop the ability to connect ideas, compare concepts, ask meaningful questions, and relate Qur'anic guidance to contemporary life.

In this way, memorization becomes a foundation for creative thinking rather than a purely mechanical activity. Previous literature supports this view by emphasizing that religious education can contribute to the development of critical and creative thinking when it includes interactive and reflective practices. Tahraoui and Merah (2017) note that traditional Qur'an education has often depended on dictation and memorization, in which the teacher explains and analyzes while learners remain largely passive. They therefore call for renewed approaches to teaching the Qur'an that respond to contemporary educational needs. Similarly, Aiyetoro, Halabi, and Zakariyah (2024) show that creative teaching in Islamic education helps students move beyond

memorization by improving their thinking skills, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities. These studies suggest that the effectiveness of religious education depends greatly on the methods used by teachers and the nature of the learning environment.

The role of religious education in developing creative thinking is also linked to the moral dimension of creativity. In some modern educational approaches, creativity is viewed mainly as the ability to produce new or original ideas. However, from an Islamic perspective, creativity should also be guided by values, responsibility, benefit, and ethical purpose. Creative thinking in Islamic education should therefore produce ideas that are not only new, but also useful, balanced, constructive, and consistent with moral principles. This makes religious education an important space for developing a form of creativity that serves the learner, the community, and wider society. This discussion is directly connected to the problem of the present study.

Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education serves students from the Yemeni community in Malaysia, a community that seeks to preserve its religious identity, Arabic language, values, and cultural belonging while living outside its homeland. In this context, Qur'anic education has a broader function than memorization alone. It contributes to building students' personalities, strengthening their confidence, protecting their identity, and preparing them to interact positively with their educational and social environment.

Therefore, the development of creative thinking becomes an important educational need for these students, especially as they live in a multicultural society and face contemporary intellectual, social, and academic challenges. The role of religious education in this study is therefore examined through the practical experience of Al-Bayan Academy. The study seeks to determine whether the Academy's Qur'an memorization circles provide an environment that encourages students to think, discuss, interact, and produce new ideas. It also examines whether teachers help students move beyond memorization toward reflection, understanding, and creative engagement with Qur'anic meanings. This is important because the success of Qur'anic education today depends not only on students' ability to memorize the Qur'an, but also on their ability to understand its guidance, reflect on its meanings, and apply its values creatively in their lives. Accordingly, religious education can play a major role in developing creative thinking when three elements are present: a supportive learning environment, teachers who encourage dialogue and reflection, and educational activities that connect memorization with understanding and application. These elements form the basis of the present study, which analyzes the role of the environment and teachers at Al-Bayan Academy in fostering creative thinking among Yemeni community students in Malaysia.

2.4. The Role of the Educational Environment in Enhancing Creative Thinking

The educational environment plays an essential role in developing creative thinking, as it provides students with an appropriate climate for exploration, dialogue, participation, and the generation of new ideas. De Bono (1992) points out that a stimulating educational environment contributes to developing creative skills by providing activities that foster autonomy, inquiry, and critical thinking. This perspective is directly related to the findings of the present study, which showed that 82% of students agreed that the time allocated for learning at Al-Bayan Academy supports their intellectual development. This result indicates that the academy's learning environment provides students with sufficient opportunities to engage in educational activities that may enhance their thinking abilities. This finding is consistent with recent literature on creative teaching in Islamic education. Aiyetoro, Halabi, and Zakariyah (2024) explain that creative teaching makes learning more meaningful and engaging and helps students develop thinking skills beyond memorization. This supports the results of the present study, which revealed that 92.3% of students affirmed that teachers encourage interaction and discussion. Such a result suggests that the educational environment at Al-Bayan Academy includes interactive elements that help students participate actively in Qur'an memorization circles, rather than remaining passive recipients of information.

Sawyer (2017) also emphasizes, through a systematic review of creativity teaching, that creative learning is strengthened when students are placed in learning environments that support interaction, exploration, and active engagement. This supports the findings of the current study, especially in relation to the positive role of the Academy's learning environment and teacher-student interaction in stimulating creative thinking. The presence of dialogue, participation, and adequate learning time reflects a generally supportive educational climate. Similarly, Hennessey and Amabile (2010) indicated that a classroom environment in which teachers encourage creativity contributes to increasing students' self-confidence and their ability to think innovatively. This is partially reflected in the findings of the present study, particularly the result showing that students perceive teachers as encouraging interaction and discussion.

However, the finding that only 64.1% of students believed that teachers directly support innovation reveals that the academy's educational environment still needs further development in terms of structured creativity-based practices. This suggests that while the general atmosphere supports interaction, more explicit strategies are needed to encourage innovation, independent thinking, and creative problem-solving. At Al-Bayan Academy, creative thinking is enhanced through an educational environment that is based on exploration and interaction, providing students with opportunities to practice critical thinking in

new ways. Nevertheless, the study's findings indicate that this role should be strengthened through more systematic educational programs, teacher training, and classroom activities that intentionally combine Qur'an memorization with reflection, interpretation, discussion, and creativity. Thus, the literature supports the study's results by confirming that a stimulating and interactive educational environment is a key factor in developing creative thinking, while the present study adds that this environment must be continuously improved to achieve a stronger balance between memorization and creative intellectual development.

2.5. The Role of the Teacher in Stimulating Creative Thinking

The teacher is one of the most influential factors in developing students' creative thinking. In any educational environment, the teacher does not merely transmit knowledge, but also guides, motivates, facilitates learning, and creates the conditions that enable students to think, question, discuss, and express ideas. The teacher's role becomes even more important in Qur'an memorization circles, where the educational process may sometimes focus mainly on repetition, correction of recitation, and retention of the Qur'anic text. Although these elements are essential in Qur'anic education, they need to be accompanied by teaching practices that stimulate understanding, reflection, interaction, and creative engagement.

A teacher who stimulates creative thinking encourages students to move from passive reception to active participation. This can be achieved through asking open-ended questions, encouraging discussion, allowing students to express their understanding, guiding them to compare meanings, and helping them connect Qur'anic values with real-life situations. Such methods enable students to develop confidence, flexibility, originality, and the ability to produce thoughtful ideas. Robinson (2011) emphasizes that creativity in education requires teaching methods that encourage exploration, participation, and learner engagement. Likewise, Beghetto and Kaufman (2007) argue that students' everyday creativity can be developed when teachers provide opportunities for questioning, interpretation, and idea generation.

In the context of Qur'anic education, the teacher's role requires a balance between preservation and intellectual development. On the one hand, the teacher must ensure accurate memorization, correct recitation, proper pronunciation, and respect for the Qur'anic text. On the other hand, the teacher should help students understand meanings, reflect on guidance, derive lessons, and apply Qur'anic values in their personal and social lives. This balance is necessary because Qur'anic education is not only concerned with preserving the words of the Qur'an, but also with forming the learner's mind, character, behavior, and awareness. The teacher's ability to stimulate creative thinking is closely connected to the learning environment. A supportive teacher creates a classroom atmosphere in which students feel safe to ask questions, present ideas, make mistakes, and engage in discussion without fear of rejection or embarrassment. This type of environment strengthens students' motivation and allows them to participate more freely. Hennessey and Amabile (2010) indicate that a classroom environment that encourages creativity can increase students' confidence and their ability to think innovatively.

Therefore, the teacher's role is not separate from the educational environment; rather, the teacher is a major element in shaping that environment. This discussion is directly related to the problem of the present study. The study seeks to examine whether teachers at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education contribute to developing creative thinking among Yemeni community students in Malaysia, or whether their role remains limited to traditional Qur'an memorization. Since these students live in a multicultural environment and face various educational and social challenges, they need teachers who can strengthen both their religious identity and their intellectual abilities. The teacher's encouragement of dialogue, questioning, and new ideas is therefore an important indicator of the Academy's role in developing students' creative-thinking skills. The findings of the present study confirm the importance of this role. A high percentage of students, 92.3%, affirmed that teachers at Al-Bayan Academy encourage interaction and discussion. This indicates that the Academy has a strong pedagogical foundation for developing creative thinking through dialogue and participation. However, only 64.1% of students agreed that teachers directly encourage new ideas and critique them.

This result shows that although interaction exists, it is not always transformed into systematic and intentional support for innovation. In other words, discussion alone is not sufficient unless it is directed toward developing students' ability to generate, analyze, evaluate, and refine ideas. Therefore, teachers in Qur'an memorization circles need specific pedagogical strategies that intentionally support creative thinking. These strategies may include brainstorming, reflective dialogue, problem-solving activities, group discussion, open-ended questioning, linking Qur'anic meanings with contemporary issues, and encouraging students to present their own reflections within the framework of Islamic values. Such practices can help students move beyond memorization toward deeper understanding and meaningful application. Accordingly, the teacher at Al-Bayan Academy represents a central factor in fostering creative thinking. The positive level of teacher-student interaction should be preserved and strengthened, while greater attention should be given to direct encouragement of innovation and new ideas. This requires continuous teacher training, updated instructional methods, and a clear educational vision that integrates Qur'an memorization with the development of creative and critical-thinking skills.

2.6. Instructional Strategies to Enhance Creative Thinking in Qur'an Memorization Circles

Instructional strategies play a central role in transforming Qur'an memorization circles from spaces focused mainly on repetition and retention into learning environments that also promote understanding, reflection, analysis, and creative thinking. Although memorization remains a fundamental objective of Qur'anic education, it becomes more effective when supported by teaching methods that encourage students to interact with Qur'anic meanings, ask questions, connect ideas, and apply values in real-life situations. Therefore, developing creative thinking in Qur'an memorization circles requires intentional pedagogical strategies that combine preservation of the Qur'anic text with active intellectual engagement.

One of the most important strategies is Qur'anic text analysis. Through this strategy, students are guided to understand verses by examining their meanings, context, linguistic features, themes, and educational implications. This helps students move beyond memorizing words toward understanding the message and reflecting on its significance. Tahraoui and Merah (2017) argue that Qur'an teaching requires renewed pedagogical approaches that overcome the limitations of purely traditional methods and make Qur'anic learning more relevant to contemporary learners. In this way, text analysis supports creative thinking because it encourages students to interpret, compare, infer, and express their understanding in a meaningful manner. Another important strategy is linking between Qur'anic verses and concepts. Students can be encouraged to identify connections between verses, themes, values, and life situations. This type of learning trains students to think relationally rather than memorizing isolated parts of the text. It also strengthens their ability to compare ideas, draw conclusions, and build a more comprehensive understanding of Qur'anic guidance.

Al-Misbahi (2006) notes that collective interaction in Qur'anic circles helps students connect ideas and generate new meanings through dialogue and discussion. This strategy is particularly useful in fostering flexibility, which is one of the main components of creative thinking. Creative thinking can also be strengthened through intellectual challenges and open-ended questions. Instead of limiting lessons to memorization and correction, teachers can present reflective questions that require students to think, analyze, and suggest possible answers. These questions may relate to the meanings of verses, moral lessons, contemporary issues, or practical applications of Qur'anic values. Such activities encourage students to produce ideas, justify their opinions, and consider different perspectives. This is especially important because creativity requires opportunities for students to explore possibilities and express ideas within a safe and guided educational environment. Collaborative and interactive learning is another effective strategy for enhancing creative thinking in Qur'an memorization circles. Group discussion, peer learning, shared reflection, and collective analysis allow students to exchange ideas and benefit from one another's perspectives. Aiyetoro, Halabi, and Zakariyah (2024) indicate that creative teaching in Islamic education is connected with activities that develop students' critical thinking, creativity, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. Therefore, interaction should not be treated as an additional activity, but as an essential part of the Qur'anic learning process.

The use of educational technology can also support creative thinking when applied appropriately. Digital applications, interactive platforms, visual materials, and educational tools can make Qur'an memorization circles more engaging and can help students understand meanings, revise memorization, and participate in reflective activities. Technology should not replace the teacher's role or the spiritual nature of Qur'anic education, but it can provide supportive methods that enrich learning and stimulate students' interest. A systematic review by Yalçınalp and Avcı (2019) shows that emerging digital educational technologies can support creativity in educational contexts when they are integrated thoughtfully into learning design. These strategies are directly related to the findings of the present study. The results showed that 92.3% of students affirmed that teachers at Al-Bayan Academy encourage interaction and discussion, which indicates the presence of a strong foundation for applying interactive and reflective strategies. The finding that 82% of students agreed that the number of hours allocated for learning supports creative thinking also suggests that the Academy has sufficient learning time that can be used to integrate activities such as discussion, analysis, questioning, and collaborative learning. However, the lower percentage related to teachers' direct encouragement of new ideas, 64.1%, shows the need for more structured strategies that intentionally promote innovation.

Accordingly, enhancing creative thinking in Qur'an memorization circles requires an integrated approach that combines memorization, understanding, reflection, discussion, and application. For Al-Bayan Academy, this means building on its existing strengths in teacher-student interaction while developing clearer instructional practices that encourage students to produce, discuss, evaluate, and refine ideas. Such strategies can help the Academy achieve a better balance between Qur'an memorization and the development of students' creative-thinking skills.

2.7. Challenges and Opportunities in Developing Creative Thinking

Developing creative thinking within Qur'an memorization circles faces several challenges, particularly when teaching remains limited to repetition, rote learning, and teacher-centered instruction. Tahraoui and Merah (2017) note that traditional Qur'an education has often relied on dictation and memorization, with the teacher occupying the main explanatory role and learners

remaining relatively passive. They further argue that reliance on a single traditional method is no longer sufficient for students in the twenty-first century, and that Qur'an teachers need to adopt new and innovative methods that produce well-rounded and socially committed learners. This supports the argument that memorization-based contexts require complementary activities that encourage understanding, reflection, interaction, and higher-order thinking.

This challenge is partially reflected in the findings of the present study. Although 92.3% of students affirmed that teachers encourage interaction and discussion, only 64.1% believed that teachers directly support innovation. This indicates that while classroom interaction exists at Al-Bayan Academy, it may not always be translated into structured practices that intentionally develop creativity. In other words, discussion and participation are present, but there remains a need to strengthen teaching methods that explicitly encourage students to generate new ideas, solve problems, ask reflective questions, and connect Qur'anic meanings with contemporary realities. Aiyetoro, Halabi, and Zakariyah (2024) also emphasize that creative teaching in Islamic education depends on teachers' understanding, beliefs, and classroom practices, and that professional development and adequate resources can enhance the implementation of creative teaching methods. This is consistent with the present study's findings, which indicate that the educational environment at Al-Bayan Academy provides a positive foundation for intellectual development, as 82% of students agreed that the time allocated for learning supports their intellectual growth.

However, this positive foundation needs to be further developed through curricula and activities that balance Qur'an memorization with reflection, interpretation, dialogue, and innovation. Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities to improve the educational process in Qur'an memorization circles. Tahraoui and Merah (2017) emphasize the need for renewed approaches in teaching the Holy Qur'an that respond to the limitations of traditional memorization-based methods. This opportunity is particularly relevant to Al-Bayan Academy, where the findings show the presence of a generally supportive educational environment and strong teacher-student interaction. These strengths can be used as a basis for developing more systematic programs that integrate memorization with understanding, contemplation, discussion, and creative application. Training teachers in innovative educational techniques is also considered a fundamental step in enhancing the quality of religious education and preparing students who are capable of critical and creative thinking. Aiyetoro, Halabi, and Zakariyah (2024) recommend professional development programs and adequate instructional resources to support creative teaching practices in Islamic education. This recommendation is strongly supported by the present study, especially in light of the relatively lower percentage related to teachers' direct support for innovation.

Therefore, professional development programs should focus on equipping teachers with practical strategies such as brainstorming, open-ended questioning, collaborative learning, Qur'anic text analysis, problem-solving activities, and the use of educational technology. Accordingly, the literature and the findings of the present study together indicate that the main challenge is not the absence of interaction within Qur'an memorization circles, but the need to transform this interaction into intentional and measurable creative-thinking practices. At the same time, the academy has important opportunities to build on its existing strengths by developing curricula, training teachers, and adopting instructional strategies that achieve a balance between Qur'an memorization and the development of students' intellectual and creative skills.

2.8. An Overview of the Yemeni Community in Malaysia

The Yemeni community in Malaysia is one of the prominent Arab communities in the country. The presence of Yemenis dates back decades, and Yemeni migration began to increase notably with the expansion of education in Malaysia over the past two decades. Malaysia is considered a preferred destination for Yemenis seeking educational opportunities for their children due to the quality of higher education and the diversity of academic programs at Malaysian universities. The number of members of the Yemeni community in Malaysia according to statistics from the Yemeni embassy is approximately 16,000 individuals, distributed among university students, workers, and refugees. Many of them arrived in Malaysia after the outbreak of the war in Yemen, and there are currently more than 20,000 Yemenis in Malaysia, including 10,000 under a social visit pass, 8,000 students, and 4,000 holding a UNHCR card (Bernama, 2019).

The Yemeni community seeks to preserve its cultural and religious identity by establishing schools and Islamic centres that provide religious education and Arabic-language instruction. Among these institutions, Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education stands out, as it offers Qur'an memorization programs and the teaching of Islamic sciences to members of the community, with a focus on developing innovative thinking alongside religious education. The Yemeni community also enjoys strong social cohesion that helps it confront challenges that may include integration into the wider Malaysian society and difficulties of adapting to the new cultural environment. Despite the economic challenges that may arise due to changing conditions in Yemen, the community seeks to overcome them through supporting the local community and providing an educational and religious environment that meets the needs of its members.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive case-study approach to examine the role of the educational environment and teachers at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education in fostering creative thinking among Yemeni community students in Malaysia. This approach is appropriate because the study focuses on one educational institution and seeks to analyze students' perceptions through measurable questionnaire data.

3.1. Research Design

The research was designed as a descriptive quantitative study based on a case study of Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education. The descriptive approach was used to identify the current reality of the educational environment, administrative support, learning time, physical surroundings, and the teacher's role in encouraging interaction, discussion, and innovation. The case-study approach was suitable because the research focuses specifically on Al-Bayan Academy as an example of a Qur'anic educational institution serving the Yemeni community in Malaysia.

3.2. Study Population and Sample

The study population consisted of students enrolled at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education in Malaysia. According to the Academy's records, the number of students enrolled at the Academy is approximately 150 male and female students. A random sample of 39 students was selected from different age groups and educational levels. The sample included both male and female students, which allowed the study to obtain varied responses regarding the role of the environment and teachers in developing creative thinking.

3.3. Research Instrument

The questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection. It was designed to measure students' perceptions of the role of the educational environment and teachers in fostering creative thinking. The questionnaire included items related to the Academy's environment, administration, learning time, physical surroundings, teacher-student interaction, discussion, encouragement of new ideas, and support for innovation. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of agreement with each statement.

3.4. Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated using SPSS. The results showed that the questionnaire had a high level of reliability. The overall Cronbach's Alpha value reached 0.923, while the validity coefficient reached 0.961. These values indicate that the questionnaire items were reliable and suitable for measuring the study variables.

Table 1: Validity and Reliability Coefficients for the Questionnaire

Dimension	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Validity Coefficient
Second	5	0.880	0.938
Third	18	0.861	0.928
Total	23	0.923	0.961

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaire was distributed to the selected sample of students at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education. The responses were collected, reviewed, coded, and entered into SPSS for statistical analysis. The data collection process aimed to obtain students' views regarding the role of the Academy's environment and teachers in developing their creative-thinking skills.

3.6. Data Analysis Methods

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the sample and to present students' responses. Arithmetic means and

standard deviations were used to determine the level of agreement with the questionnaire items. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. These methods were appropriate for identifying the degree to which the educational environment and teachers contribute to fostering creative thinking among students.

4. RESULTS

The study results reveal the vital role of the educational environment and teachers at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education in developing creative thinking among members of the Yemeni community in Malaysia. The results indicate that an educational environment that encourages critical and creative thinking, in addition to the pedagogical methods adopted by teachers, contributes substantially to strengthening students' innovation and creativity skills.

4.1. Presentation and Analysis of Personal Variables

This research aims to present and analyze personal variables such as gender, age, and educational qualification, which are important factors for understanding their effect on the studied topic and how they interact with one another. The analysis will address the following aspects:

Table 2: Distribution of the Sample Individuals According to Personal Variables (Gender, Age, and Educational Qualification)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	7	17.9
	Female	32	82.1
	Total	39	100.0
Age	From 6 to 10 years	2	5.13
	From 11 to 15 years	11	28.21
	From 16 to 20 years	13	33.33
	From 21 years and above	13	33.33
	Total	39	100.0
Educational qualification	Primary	4	10.26
	Preparatory	9	23.08
	Secondary	18	46.15
	University	8	20.51
	Total	39	100.0

Source: Prepared by the researcher from the field-study data (2024) using the SPSS program.

Table 2 shows that the percentage of females in the sample reached (82.1%), whereas the percentage of males was (17.9%), indicating that the vast majority of the sample members were females. The results also showed that most sample members' ages ranged between (16 to 20 years) and (21 years and above), with each category constituting (33.3%). This was followed by the age group (from 11 to 15 years) at (28.21%), while the lowest proportion in the sample was for the age group (from 6 to 10 years) at (5.13%). This indicates good representation of all age groups in the study sample. As for educational qualification, the highest percentage was for secondary qualification at (46.15%), followed by preparatory at (23.08%), then university at (20.51%), and the lowest percentage was for primary qualification at (10.26%).

4.2. Basic Data Analysis

A five-point Likert scale is used to calculate the weighted mean for responses to the questions with the aim of understanding respondents' opinions and orientations toward the questionnaire. The arithmetic mean is calculated, and then the direction is determined based on the values of this mean. It is noted that the interval length used here is (4/5) or approximately (0.80), and

the interval was calculated based on dividing the five numbers (1,2,3,4,5) into four equal distances, as shown in the following table.

Table 3: Five-Point Likert Scale

Weight	Weighted Mean	Degree of Agreement
1	From 1–1.80	1
2	From 1.81–2.60	2
3	From 2.61–3.40	3
4	From 3.41–4.20	4
5	From 4.21–5	5

Source: Five-point Likert scale.

4.3. The Impact of the Environment and the Teacher at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education on Developing Creative Thinking among Members of the Yemeni Community in Malaysia

4.3.1. The Impact of the Environment (Administration, Time, and Surroundings) at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education on Developing Creative Thinking

The educational environment at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education plays a decisive role in developing students’ creative thinking. This environment consists of several interrelated elements, including administration, time, and the general surroundings within the Academy, all of which contribute to stimulating creativity among students.

Administration at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education is considered the fundamental pillar in creating an educational environment that encourages creativity. By developing strategic plans that support the use of innovative instructional methods, the administration provides a framework that fosters creative thinking. It also contributes to providing the necessary resources, such as interactive educational tools and workshops that focus on creativity. In addition, the administration allows students the freedom to express their ideas and participate in decision-making related to their educational activities, which enhances their sense of responsibility and creativity.

Time management at the Academy also plays an important role in stimulating creativity. It provides designated periods for creative activities such as group discussions, problem-solving, and cultural and sports activities, which enhances students’ ability to think outside the box. On the other hand, the general surroundings within the Academy are designed to support creative thinking, characterized by calmness and organization, with open spaces that encourage discussion and interaction among students. The interactive environment provided by the Academy, including cultural activities and Qur’anic competitions, helps students discover and refine their creative skills. Moreover, positive relationships between students and teachers contribute to creating a climate that encourages experimentation and risk-taking in thinking.

By bringing these elements together, the educational environment at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education constitutes an effective model for developing students’ creative-thinking skills, which distinguishes it in the field of Qur’anic education and innovation.

Table 4: The Impact of the Environment (Administration, Time, and Surroundings) at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education on Developing Creative Thinking

Statement	Measure	1	2	3	4	5	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Agreement Percentage	Rank	Degree of Agreement
The number of hours spent in learning at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education	Frequency	0	1	6	19	13	4.13	0.759	82%	2	4

helps develop creative thinking.	Percentage (%)	0	2.6	15.4	48.7	33.3					
The place at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education motivates innovative thinking.	Frequency	1	0	8	15	15	4.10	0.900	77%	3	4
	Percentage (%)	2.5	0	20.5	38.5	38.5					
The administration of Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education encourages innovative thinking.	Frequency	0	1	12	19	7	3.82	0.745	66.6%	4	4
	Percentage (%)	0	2.6	30.8	48.7	17.9					
Total							4.02	0.801	75.2%	3	4

First: Explanation of the Table

The table above presents the frequencies, percentages, weighted means, standard deviations, ranks, and degree of agreement for the responses of the study sample to the statements of the dimension related to “the impact of the environment (administration, time, and surroundings) at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education on developing creative thinking.” Based on the table results, it is evident that most respondents’ degree of agreement ranged between (4) and (5) on most dimension statements. The statement related to “the number of hours spent in learning at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education helps develop creative thinking” obtained an agreement percentage of (82%), with a weighted mean of (4.13) and a standard deviation of (0.759). By contrast, the statement related to “the administration of Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education encourages creative thinking” obtained the lowest agreement percentage at (66.6%), with a weighted mean of (3.82) and a standard deviation of (0.745).

Second: Analysis of the Table

Based on the study sample’s views regarding the impact of the environment (administration, time, and surroundings) at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education on developing creative thinking, it is clear that factors such as the number of hours a student spends at the Academy and the place where learning occurs play a major role in enhancing creative thinking. The data show that the time allocated for learning received high levels of agreement, indicating that allocating sufficient time for learning positively affects students’ ability to think creatively. On the other hand, although the administration encourages creative thinking, the agreement percentage for this factor was lower compared to the other factors, indicating a need to further strengthen the administration’s role in supporting creative thinking. Overall, the table reflects that the educational environment at Al-Bayan Academy contributes to developing creative thinking; however, there are aspects that can be improved to enhance this development more effectively.

4.3.2. The Impact of the Teacher at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education on Developing Creative Thinking

The teacher at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education is considered one of the fundamental pillars in the process of developing students' creative thinking. The teacher's role is not limited to conveying information and facilitating memorization of texts; rather, it extends to a pivotal role in motivating students to think in an innovative and creative manner. Through the diverse teaching methods adopted by the teacher, students are able to move beyond the limits of memorization and repetition into broader spaces of analysis, inference, and innovation. The teacher encourages students to ask questions and engage in critical thinking, which helps them develop their cognitive and creative abilities. The educational environment created by the teacher in the Academy—characterized by encouragement and support also plays a major role in developing creative-thinking skills. In addition, the teacher's interaction with students in a way that motivates them to think outside the box and explore new ideas enhances their capacity for creativity and prepares them to become distinguished individuals in their community, capable of confronting challenges through innovative and effective approaches.

Table (5): The Impact of the Teacher at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education on Developing Creative Thinking

Statement	Measure	1	2	3	4	5	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Agreement Percentage	Rank	Degree of Agreement
Teachers at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education help promote innovative thinking.	Frequency	1	0	7	16	15	4.128	0.884	79.5%	2	4
	Percentage (%)	2.6	0	17.9	41.0	38.5					
Teachers at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education adopt interactivity in discussion.	Frequency	0	1	2	14	22	4.46	0.709	92.3%	1	5
	Percentage (%)	0	2.5	5.2	35.9	56.4					
Teachers at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur'anic Education encourage new ideas and critique them.	Frequency	0	0	14	17	8	3.85	0.735	64.1%	3	4
	Percentage (%)	0	0	35.9	43.6	20.5					
Total							4.146	0.776	78.63%	2	4

First: Explanation of the Table

The table above presents the frequencies, percentages, weighted arithmetic means, standard deviation, rank, and degree of agreement for the responses of the study sample to the statements of the dimension related to “the impact of the teacher at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education on developing creative thinking.” The results indicate that most respondents’ degree of agreement ranged between (4) and (5) on most of the dimension’s statements. The statement “Teachers at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education adopt interactivity in discussion” obtained the highest agreement percentage (92.3%), with a weighted mean (4.308) and a standard deviation (0.709), whereas the statement “Teachers at Al-Bayan Academy enhance creative thinking” obtained a lower agreement percentage (64.1%), with a weighted mean (3.85) and a standard deviation (0.735).

Second: Analysis of the Table

Based on the study sample’s views regarding the impact of the teacher at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education on developing creative thinking, it is evident that the teacher’s role extends beyond rote instruction to encouraging interactivity and discussion, which substantially enhances students’ creative thinking. The data show that stimulating interactivity within Qur’anic circles received the highest levels of agreement, indicating that students benefit greatly from teaching approaches that rely on dialogue and discussion. Nevertheless, strengthening creative thinking requires greater focus, as the data showed a lower agreement percentage for this statement, suggesting that there is scope to improve teaching strategies aimed at enhancing creative thinking. In general, the table reflects that the teacher at Al-Bayan Academy plays an essential role in shaping students’ creative-thinking skills; however, there are opportunities to strengthen this role further.

4.4. Recommendations

Based on the research results, several recommendations are proposed to improve the role of the environment and the teacher at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education in enhancing creative thinking among members of the Yemeni community in Malaysia. These recommendations include integrating activities that stimulate innovative thinking within the Academy’s programs, as well as training teachers to develop their skills in supporting students’ creativity.

1. Developing the educational environment: Updating the Academy’s educational programs to include activities and instructional modes that encourage and develop innovative thinking.
2. Training teachers: Organizing training courses for teachers with the aim of enabling them to use innovative pedagogical methods that stimulate students’ creative thinking.
3. Strengthening community collaboration: Enhancing cooperation between the Academy and the local community to support creative-thinking initiatives and integrate them into religious and educational activities.
4. Providing technological resources: Providing modern technological educational tools that support creative thinking and enhance the quality of the educational process in the Academy.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the educational environment and the teacher at Al-Bayan Academy for Qur’anic Education have a clear impact on developing students’ creative thinking. The results showed that allocating sufficient time for learning within the Academy contributes significantly to enhancing creative-thinking skills, as 82% of students agreed that the number of hours they spend learning helps them develop their creative capacities. However, the agreement percentage regarding the administration’s role in encouraging creative thinking was lower (66.6%), indicating the need to strengthen the administration’s role in supporting an educational environment that is more stimulating for creativity.

With regard to the teacher’s role, the study found that 92.3% of students affirmed that teachers at the Academy enhance interactivity and discussion within Qur’anic circles, which contributes to developing their creative-thinking skills. Nevertheless, the agreement percentage that teachers directly enhance creative thinking was lower (64.1%), indicating the need to develop teaching methods to include more effective strategies for supporting creativity. Based on these results, the study recommends providing training programs for teachers to strengthen their ability to stimulate creativity, in addition to improving the educational environment so that it becomes more supportive of developing students’ creative-thinking skills.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

For this study, data has been gathered with each respondent's prior consent to provide feedback. No names or other personally identifiable information is gathered, so no identities are disclosed in this paper. Based on the information gathered and the defined study objectives, an objective analysis has been made.

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

All authors contributed to the preparation of this paper.

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Statement of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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