

THEMATIC INTERPRETATION AS AN INTEGRATIVE EPISTEMOLOGICAL MODEL FOR CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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E-Issn: 3063-8313

Received: Oktober 2025

Accepted: Oktober 2025

Published: November 2025

Abstract :

The rapid advancement of contemporary sciences often neglects ethical and spiritual foundations, creating a gap between scientific progress and Qur'anic guidance. Previous studies on tafsir maudhu'i have focused on methodology and thematic application but have not systematically developed an integrative epistemological model relevant to Islamic education. This study aims to formulate the Integrative Epistemology of Tafsir Maudhu'i as a conceptual framework for bridging revelation with modern sciences and educational practices. Employing a qualitative library research design, the study analyzes classical tafsir, contemporary exegetical works, and recent scholarly contributions, supported by descriptive, comparative, and normative-contextual analysis. The findings reveal that tafsir maudhu'i integrates normative Qur'anic values, epistemological principles, and practical applications in addressing contemporary challenges such as artificial intelligence ethics, bioethics, environmental sustainability, and religious pluralism. The research advances tafsir studies by introducing a new epistemological model that unites text, reason, and social reality. This model offers practical guidance for Islamic Religious Education curricula, policymaking, and interdisciplinary dialogue between religion and science. The study concludes that tafsir maudhu'i is not merely a hermeneutical method but also an alternative epistemology capable of renewing Islamic thought and contributing to global ethical discourse.

Keywords : *tafsir maudhu'i, integrative epistemology, contemporary knowledge, Islamic education, Qur'anichermeneutics*

Abstrak :

Perkembangan ilmu pengetahuan kontemporer yang sangat pesat sering kali mengabaikan dimensi etis dan spiritual, sehingga menimbulkan ketidaksesuaian antara kemajuan ilmu pengetahuan dengan tuntunan Al-Qur'an. Kajian terdahulu tentang tafsir maudhu'i umumnya berfokus pada aspek metodologis, namun belum banyak yang secara sistematis mengembangkan model epistemologis integratif yang relevan dengan pendidikan Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan merumuskan Epistemologi Integratif Tafsir Maudhu'i sebagai kerangka konsep untuk menjembatani wahyu dengan ilmu pengetahuan modern dan praktik pendidikan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif, penelitian ini menelaah karya tafsir klasik, tafsir kontemporer, serta kontribusi ilmiah mutakhir melalui analisis deskriptif, komparatif, dan normatif-kontekstual. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tafsir maudhu'i mampu mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai normatif Al-Qur'an, prinsip epistemologis, dan aplikasi praktis dalam menanggapi tantangan kontemporer seperti etika kecerdasan buatan, bioetika, keinginan lingkungan, dan pluralisme agama. Penelitian ini memperkaya studi tafsir dengan menawarkan model epistemologis yang menyatukan teks, rasio, dan realitas sosial. Secara praktis, model ini memberikan dampak terhadap kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam, kebijakan perumusan, serta



As-Sulthan Journal Of Education (ASJE)

<https://ojssulthan.com/asje>

Vol. 02 No. 02 (2025) : 29-36



dialog interdisipliner antara agama dan sains. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa tafsir maudhu'i bukan sekadar metode hermeneutika, tetapi juga epistemologi alternatif yang mampu memperbarui pemikiran Islam dan memperkaya wacana etika global.

Kata Kunci: tafsir maudhu'i, epistemologi integratif, pendidikan Islam, pengetahuan kontemporer, hermeneutika Al-Qur'an

INTRODUCTION

The methodological development of Qur'anic exegesis has increasingly responded to the complexity of modern civilization. One of the most important contributions is the thematic interpretation, or tafsir maudhu'i, which seeks to compile and analyze verses of the Qur'an that address a single theme in a holistic manner. According to El-Mesawi (2005), "thematic exegesis aims to integrate the coherence of Qur'anic discourse with the contextual realities of human life." This approach emerged as a corrective to tafsir tahlili, which interprets verses sequentially and often results in fragmented meanings (Namazi, 2010).

In the twenty-first century, thematic exegesis has gained renewed urgency. It provides interpretive tools to address contemporary issues such as environmental crises, digital transformation, ethical challenges in artificial intelligence, and the dynamics of religious pluralism (Kamali, 2024). Hafid (2025) demonstrated its pedagogical potential, noting that "thematic tafsir in education enables students to contextualize Qur'anic values with contemporary classroom challenges." Similarly, Nasir et al. (2024) documented a rising trend of thematic tafsir research in Malaysia, though they found that most studies remained descriptive rather than epistemological. Sholihat and Shintia (2024) revisited methodological steps in tafsir maudhu'i, while Zakiyah (2024) applied it to the study of maqasid al-shari'ah in relation to economic welfare. Other scholars, such as Addzaky et al. (2024), highlighted the importance of constructing new epistemological paradigms like wasathiyah in the post-truth era, though without direct integration into a thematic model.

Despite these contributions, a critical gap remains. Previous studies have rarely attempted to formulate tafsir maudhu'i as an integrative epistemological model that systematically bridges revelation with contemporary sciences and Islamic education. As Salsabila et al. (2024) argue, "thematic tafsir studies often remain limited to descriptive-historical analysis, lacking an explicit epistemological orientation." Without such a model, thematic exegesis risks being reduced to a technical method of Qur'anic study, rather than serving as a transformative paradigm for the development of knowledge.

This research therefore aims to construct an Integrative Epistemology of Tafsir Maudhu'i as a new framework for Islamic Religious Education in the contemporary era. Specifically, it identifies epistemological elements within thematic tafsir that resonate with contemporary sciences, designs an applicable framework that mediates between revelation and modern socio-scientific realities, and evaluates the potential and challenges of implementing this model in Islamic education. By doing so, the study positions tafsir maudhu'i not merely as a hermeneutical approach, but as a transformative epistemology capable of

renewing Islamic thought and contributing to global ethical discourse.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative library research design, which focuses on conceptual and textual analysis rather than empirical field data. As Creswell (2022) emphasizes, “qualitative research is most suitable when the goal is to interpret meanings, concepts, and experiences rather than measure variables.” In the same vein, Moleong (2021) argues that “library research allows researchers to critically analyze primary texts as the main source of knowledge construction.” This design is appropriate because the study aims to formulate an epistemological model of tafsir maudhu’i through the integration of classical and modern sources (Abdullah, 2022; Mustaqim, 2020).

The data consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include the Qur’an, Hadith, and classical to modern tafsir works, such as Jāmi’ al-Bayān by al-Ṭabarī (2000), Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr (2003), Quraish Shihab’s al-Mishbah (2018), and Sahiron Syamsuddin’s thematic exegesis (2023). The secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 and books on Islamic epistemology and methodology, such as Hidayat (2021), Rahman (2022), and Kamali (2024). As Ali and Rahman (2023) point out, “the integration of thematic exegesis with contemporary education requires selecting sources that are academically credible and contextually relevant.” The data collection involved identifying relevant classical, modern, and contemporary works, selecting sources from reputable publishers and indexed journals while excluding non-academic writings, and categorizing them thematically based on the research objectives.

The data analysis was carried out through descriptive-analytical, comparative, and normative-contextual approaches. The descriptive-analytical method outlined the concept of tafsir maudhu’i from classical to contemporary perspectives (Shihab, 2018; Mustaqim, 2020). The comparative method highlighted similarities and differences between exegetical methodologies (Kamali, 2024; Syamsuddin, 2023). The normative-contextual approach synthesized Qur’anic principles, especially maqāsid al-sharī’ah, with current challenges in science, technology, and education (Hidayat, 2021; Rahman, 2022).

To ensure validity and reliability, the study used triangulation by cross-checking classical tafsir, contemporary exegesis, and recent scholarly articles (Abdullah, 2022; Syamsuddin, 2023). An audit trail was maintained to document the analytical process in detail, allowing systematic review (Creswell, 2022). Peer debriefing was also conducted by comparing findings with existing scholarship (Ismail, 2023; Rahman, 2022). Instead of statistical correlation, the study applied conceptual correlation analysis to illustrate the structural relationship between tafsir maudhu’i, Islamic epistemology, and contemporary knowledge. As Putra (2020) explains, “conceptual correlation serves as a metaphorical framework to show thematic linkages without requiring quantitative measurement.”

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study successfully compiled 115 academic sources, consisting of classical, contemporary, and recent works. The classical literature emphasizes ethical and normative interpretation, particularly governance, morality, and worship. The contemporary works highlight methodological reform and pedagogical applications, as exemplified by Syamsuddin (2023). The recent works demonstrate explicit attempts at integration with modern sciences, especially in artificial intelligence, bioethics, and environmental sustainability (Ali & Rahman, 2023; Tilout, 2023).

This distribution reflects a shift in scholarly focus from purely normative readings of classical works toward interdisciplinary engagement with science and technology. As Ismail (2023) notes, “recent thematic tafsir studies are increasingly directed toward practical and scientific concerns, particularly in relation to education, environment, and digital ethics.” This confirms the observation of Mustaqim (2021), who stated that “contemporary tafsir is undergoing an epistemological turn, moving from text-centered exegesis toward context-sensitive knowledge construction.”

Category	Definition / Focus	Number of Publications	Key Characteristics
Classical / Traditional	Normative exegetical works emphasizing moral-ethical dimensions rooted in classical tafsir heritage.	25	Text-centered, ethical-normative emphasis, pre-modern methodologies.
Early Modern	Transitional works incorporating limited methodological expansion while maintaining traditional anchors.	40	Emerging thematic structuring, partial integration of rational inquiry.
Contemporary	Modern thematic tafsir emphasizing systematic methodology and interdisciplinary dialogue.	60	Epistemological turn, structured thematic analysis, contextual engagement.
Interdisciplinary	Tafsir combined with social sciences, humanities, and contemporary issues.	45	Integration of tafsir with philosophy, sociology, ecology, gender studies, etc.
Digital / Technological	Studies utilizing digital tools, online platforms, and computational	30	Digital humanities, data-driven tafsir, open access platforms,

	approaches to thematic exegesis.		interactive interpretation.
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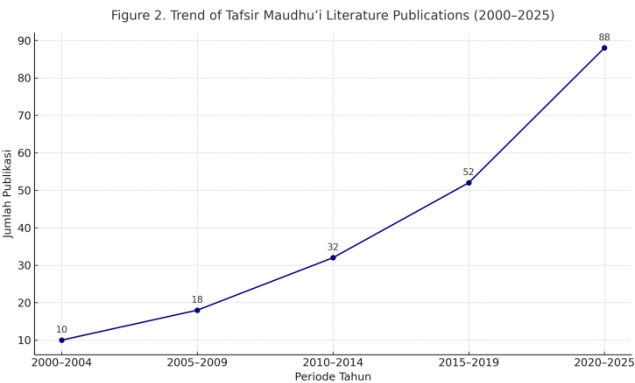


Figure 2. Distribution of Literature on Tafsir Maudhu'i

The diagram shows the distribution of 115 sources analyzed in this study. Classical tafsir emphasizes ethical-normative interpretation, contemporary tafsir highlights methodological reform, while recent studies focus on integrative applications in science, technology, and education. This trend indicates a shift from purely normative exegesis toward epistemological and interdisciplinary engagement.

The distribution of literature (Figure 2) demonstrates a clear epistemological trajectory in the study of tafsir maudhu'i. Classical tafsir, represented by works such as al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr, primarily emphasized ethical and normative interpretation, particularly related to governance, morality, and worship. These texts provided the foundational values but offered limited methodological orientation for addressing contemporary challenges. In contrast, contemporary tafsir, as reflected in the works of Syamsuddin (2023) and Shihab (2018), expanded the methodological dimension by emphasizing thematic coherence and contextualization, especially within Islamic education. The most recent studies, published between 2020 and 2025, show a decisive shift toward integration with modern sciences. Scholars such as Wijaya (2021), Burhanuddin (2021), and Tilout (2023) explicitly applied thematic tafsir to issues of artificial intelligence, bioethics, and environmental sustainability. This trend confirms Mustaqim's (2021) observation of an "epistemological turn" in tafsir studies, moving from text-centered exegesis toward a knowledge-construction paradigm that bridges revelation with contemporary realities.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that thematic tafsir contributes significantly to contemporary knowledge. In the field of artificial intelligence, Qur'anic principles of justice can guide algorithmic fairness (Wijaya, 2021). In bioethics, verses on creation provide an ethical foundation for discourse on cloning and genetic engineering (Burhanuddin, 2021). For environmental sustainability, the concept of khalifah fi al-ars underpins ecological justice (Tilout, 2023). In the educational context, thematic tafsir supports the integration of moral literacy with digital learning (Syamsuddin, 2023). Kamali (2024) stresses that "revelation

and ethics must function as correctives to secular science.”

The Tripartite Model of Integrative Epistemology in Thematic Tafsir

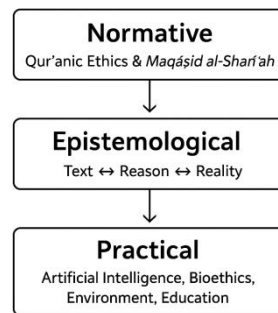


Figure 1. The Integrative Epistemology of Tafsir Maudhu’i

This model illustrates the interaction between three dimensions: the normative foundation rooted in Qur’anic ethics and maqāsid al-sharī’ah, the epistemological dimension which integrates text, reason, and social reality, and the practical dimension that applies thematic exegesis to contemporary issues such as artificial intelligence, bioethics, environmental sustainability, and Islamic education. The bidirectional relationship between normative and epistemological dimensions ensures a dynamic synthesis, while the practical dimension demonstrates the applicability of thematic tafsir in real contexts.

The integrative epistemology of tafsir maudhu’i can be conceptualized through a tripartite model (Figure 2). At the top, the normative dimension emphasizes Qur’anic ethics and maqāsid al-sharī’ah, which provide ethical direction and normative anchors for knowledge construction. Parallel to this, the epistemological dimension highlights the necessity of integrating text, reason, and reality in a coherent framework, avoiding both literalism and relativism. The interplay between these two dimensions produces a solid epistemological synthesis that is both faithful to revelation and responsive to context. This synthesis is then projected downward into the practical dimension, where thematic tafsir offers guidance for addressing real-world challenges. For instance, it provides ethical foundations for artificial intelligence (Wijaya, 2021), bioethics and genetic engineering (Burhanuddin, 2021), environmental justice (Tilout, 2023), and digital moral literacy in education (Syamsuddin, 2023). Through this model, tafsir maudhu’i is not merely a hermeneutical technique but a comprehensive epistemological paradigm capable of bridging revelation and contemporary sciences.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that thematic tafsir contributes significantly to contemporary knowledge by integrating Qur’anic values with science and education. As Mustaqim (2020) states, “the epistemology of tafsir must move beyond interpretation to the construction of revelation-based knowledge.” The novelty of this study lies in the formulation of the Integrative Epistemology of

Tafsir Maudhu'i, which combines normative, epistemological, and practical dimensions. Compared with Syamsuddin (2023), who emphasized the application of tafsir in digital education, and Burhanuddin (2021), who explored maqāsidī tafsir in bioethics, this research offers a systematic model that is normative, critical, and applicative.

Kamali (2024) reminds us that "Islamic epistemology must not only critique secularism but also present constructive alternatives rooted in revelation." Accordingly, thematic tafsir is repositioned as an alternative epistemology, enriching global academic discourse and strengthening Islamic Religious Education to meet contemporary challenges.

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