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From Normative Citation to Critical Analysis: Evaluating Methodological Problems in Contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic Scholarship

Al Fiqri Ardiansyah[1], Marhamah Annazah Tambunan[2],
[1,2] Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indoneisa
Corresponding E-mail: alfiqriardiansyah3@gmail.com

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Abstract
Contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship has expanded significantly into social, ethical, ecological, familial, political, digital, and therapeutic issues, yet this thematic vitality is not always accompanied by equivalent methodological rigor. This article examines the methodological problem of normative citation, namely the tendency to use Qur'anic verses and tafsir references as direct legitimating evidence rather than as textual materials requiring sustained interpretive analysis. The study aims to evaluate how selected Indonesian Qur'anic studies articles construct arguments through Qur'anic citation, operationalize tafsir methods, integrate theoretical frameworks, and move from textual evidence to academic conclusion. Methodologically, the article employs a qualitative textual research design combining document analysis and qualitative content analysis. It analyzes an initial purposive corpus of fourteen Indonesian Qur'anic and tafsir studies articles published between 2020 and 2025, focusing on citation patterns, interpretive mediation, methodological clarity, tafsir utilization, theoretical integration, contextual relevance, and argumentative accountability. The findings show that many studies employ Qur'anic verses as normative legitimation for contemporary issues, while methodological procedures such as thematic tafsir, contextual interpretation, hermeneutics, comparative analysis, and living Qur'an are not always operationalized clearly. The study also reveals a productive but unresolved tension between textual fidelity and contextual relevance. This article contributes to Qur'anic studies by distinguishing between normative citation, interpretive analysis, and critical-analytical Qur'anic scholarship. It argues that Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship can preserve Qur'anic normativity while strengthening academic accountability through textual selection transparency, semantic analysis, contextual mediation, tafsir comparison, theoretical consistency, and traceable argumentation.
Keywords: Qur'anic scholarship; normative citation; Indonesian tafsir studies; methodological rigor; critical analysis

Abstrak
Kajian Al-Qur'an kontemporer di Indonesia telah berkembang secara signifikan ke dalam isu-isu sosial, etis, ekologis, keluarga, politik, digital, dan terapeutik. Namun, vitalitas tematik tersebut tidak selalu disertai dengan ketelitian metodologis yang sepadan. Artikel ini mengkaji problem metodologis berupa kutipan normatif, yaitu kecenderungan menggunakan ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an dan rujukan tafsir sebagai bukti legitimasi langsung, bukan sebagai bahan tekstual yang memerlukan analisis interpretatif secara mendalam dan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengevaluasi bagaimana artikel-artikel kajian Al-Qur'an Indonesia terpilih membangun argumentasi melalui kutipan Al-Qur'an, mengoperasionalkan metode tafsir, mengintegrasikan kerangka teori, serta bergerak dari bukti tekstual menuju kesimpulan akademik. Secara metodologis, artikel ini menggunakan desain penelitian tekstual kualitatif yang menggabungkan analisis dokumen dan analisis isi kualitatif. Penelitian ini menganalisis korpus awal purposif yang terdiri atas empat belas artikel kajian Al-Qur'an dan tafsir Indonesia yang terbit antara tahun 2020 dan 2025, dengan fokus pada pola kutipan, mediasi interpretatif, kejelasan metodologis, penggunaan tafsir, integrasi teori, relevansi kontekstual, dan akuntabilitas argumentatif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa banyak kajian menggunakan ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an sebagai legitimasi normatif bagi isu-isu kontemporer, sementara prosedur metodologis seperti tafsir tematik, interpretasi kontekstual, hermeneutika, analisis komparatif, dan living Qur'an tidak selalu dioperasionalkan secara jelas. Penelitian ini juga mengungkap adanya ketegangan yang produktif tetapi belum sepenuhnya terselesaikan antara kesetiaan tekstual dan relevansi kontekstual. Artikel ini berkontribusi pada kajian Al-Qur'an dengan membedakan antara kutipan normatif, analisis interpretatif, dan kajian Al-Qur'an kritis-analitis. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa kajian Al-Qur'an Indonesia dapat mempertahankan normativitas Al-Qur'an sekaligus memperkuat akuntabilitas akademik melalui transparansi pemilihan teks, analisis semantik, mediasi kontekstual, perbandingan tafsir, konsistensi teoretis, dan argumentasi yang dapat ditelusuri.
Kata kunci: *kajian Al-Qur'an; kutipan normatif; kajian tafsir Indonesia; ketelitian metodologis; analisis kritis*

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INTRODUCTION

Qur'anic scholarship in the contemporary Muslim world now operates within an intellectual field shaped by the intersection of sacred textual authority, modern academic norms, and rapid socio-religious transformation. The Qur'an is simultaneously approached as divine guidance within Muslim communities and as a textual, historical, hermeneutical, ethical, legal, and socio-cultural object of scholarly inquiry. This dual status produces a persistent methodological tension. On the one hand, Qur'anic interpretation remains inseparable from the normative authority of revelation; on the other hand, academic Qur'anic studies require transparent procedures of interpretation, critical engagement with previous scholarship, and accountable construction of arguments. Contemporary scholarship has therefore increasingly moved beyond the mere reproduction of inherited exegetical claims toward questions of context, discourse, readerly agency, textual coherence, interpretive plurality, and the social location of interpretation.[1]

This tension is especially significant in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country and one of the most active sites of contemporary Islamic knowledge production. Recent demographic reports indicate that approximately 87% of Indonesia's population identifies as Muslim, making Indonesia a crucial setting for examining the relationship between Qur'anic authority, public religiosity, Islamic education, and academic publication.[2] Within this socio-intellectual context, Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship has expanded across Islamic universities, *pesantren* networks, public religious discourse, and peer-reviewed journals. Its themes now include living Qur'an, gender, ecology, mental health, social ethics, interreligious relations, scientific interpretation, family ethics, political theology, digital religious discourse, and applied Qur'anic ethics. This thematic expansion demonstrates the vitality of Indonesian Qur'anic studies, but it also raises a critical methodological question: to what extent do contemporary studies move beyond the normative citation of Qur'anic verses toward systematic, contextual, and analytically accountable interpretation?

The problem addressed in this article emerges from a recurring tendency in contemporary Qur'anic research: Qur'anic verses, classical tafsir, modern tafsir, or statements of authoritative exegetes are frequently cited as final proof rather than treated as interpretive materials requiring methodological mediation. In many studies, a verse is selected to support a pre-existing claim about education, morality, family life, ecology, leadership, social harmony, gender, public ethics, or state-religion relations, yet the article does not always explain why that verse was selected, how its semantic field was analyzed, how its historical context was considered, how different tafsir traditions were compared, or how the conclusion was derived through an explicit interpretive procedure. This pattern may be called normative citation**:** the use of Qur'anic textual authority as direct legitimization without sufficient analytical processing. The issue is not the use of the Qur'an as a normative source; such use is legitimate and unavoidable within Islamic intellectual traditions. The methodological problem lies in transforming the Qur'anic text into an argumentative endpoint without adequate hermeneutical, contextual, linguistic, comparative, or theoretical analysis.

This problem reflects a broader theoretical tension between normativity and critical analysis in Qur'anic studies. Normativity refers to the Qur'an's authoritative role as divine guidance within Muslim life, whereas critical analysis refers to the academic requirement that interpretation be conducted through explicit methods, reasoned argumentation, and verifiable analytical procedures. Fazlur Rahman's theory of double movement is central to this discussion because it criticizes atomistic readings and proposes a movement from present problems to the historical-moral context of revelation,

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[1] M Shah and M A Haleem, *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199698646.001.0001; Abdullah Saeed, *Islamic Thought: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006); Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Rethinking the Qur'an: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics* (Utrecht: Humanistics University Press, 2004); Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity* (University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[2] Pew Research Center, "5 Facts about Muslims and Christians in Indonesia" (Pew Research Center, 2024), https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/03/28/5-facts-about-muslims-and-christians-in-indonesia/; Katadata, "The Majority of Indonesia's Population Is Muslim in the First Half of 2024" (Katadata Databoks, 2024).

and then back to contemporary ethical application.[3] Abdullah Saeed's contextualist hermeneutics similarly argues that contemporary interpretation, especially of ethico-legal passages, must distinguish between universal moral principles and historically contingent rulings, taking into account the hierarchy of Qur'anic values, the interpretive tradition, and changing social conditions.[4] Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's discourse-oriented hermeneutics further insists that the Qur'an should not be reduced to a static proof-text, but should be understood through language, culture, communication, and interpretive history.[5] Together, these approaches provide a theoretical basis for distinguishing between citation as religious legitimation and interpretation as disciplined scholarly analysis.

Previous studies have made important contributions to the development of Qur'anic interpretation, but they have generally evolved along several partially separate trajectories. One major trajectory examines classical and modern tafsir traditions, showing how exegetical authority, linguistic reasoning, theology, jurisprudence, historical context, and social concerns shape the production of meaning. Studies in this line demonstrate that Qur'anic interpretation is never methodologically neutral; it is shaped by assumptions about revelation, language, authority, context, and the role of the interpreter.[6] Pink's work on contemporary Muslim Qur'anic interpretation, for example, shows that modern tafsir is shaped not only by the Qur'anic text but also by media, genealogy, intellectual networks, and interpretive communities.[7] This body of scholarship has clarified the historical and social conditions of interpretation, but it has not always examined how contemporary academic articles themselves operationalize method when using Qur'anic citations.

A second trajectory focuses on contextual interpretation and Islamic hermeneutics. This literature has been concerned with how Qur'anic meanings can be related to modern ethical and social realities without collapsing into either rigid literalism or unconstrained subjectivism. Rahman's double movement, Saeed's contextualist approach, and later discussions of Islamic hermeneutics have emphasized the need to balance textual fidelity with ethical adaptability.[8] In Indonesia, similar concerns appear in debates over whether modern hermeneutics can be integrated with classical Islamic exegetical methods, particularly around historical context, reader agency, and the authority of tradition.[9] At the same time, the interpretive plurality associated with classical Islamic traditions should not be overlooked. Studies on the Akbarī School, for instance, show that multiplicity of meaning has long been recognized within Islamic intellectual history, even if framed differently from modern hermeneutical theory.[10] This suggests that contextual interpretation is not necessarily an external

[3] Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*.

[4] C Rois, A Irfan, and H Anam, "Islamic Hierarchy Of Value: Abdullah Saeed's Progressive Interpretation of the Qur'an," *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 49, no. 1 (2025): 205–21, https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v49i1.1125; A Duderija, "A Case Study of Patriarchy and Slavery: The Hermeneutical Importance of Qur'ānic Assumptions in the Development of a Values-Based and Purposive Qur'ān-Sunna Hermeneutic," in *Maqasid Al-Shari'a and Contemporary Reformist Muslim Thought: An Examination*, 2014, 219–45, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137319418_10; Saeed, *Islamic Thought: An Introduction*.

[5] Abu Zayd, *Rethinking the Qur'an: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics*.

[6] Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*; Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an* (Routledge, 2006); Abu Zayd, *Rethinking the Qur'an: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics*.

[7] Johanna Pink, *Muslim Qur'anic Interpretation Today: Media, Genealogies and Interpretive Communities* (Equinox, 2019).

[8] Rois, Irfan, and Anam, "Islamic Hierarchy Of Value: Abdullah Saeed's Progressive Interpretation of the Qur'an"; A Duderija, *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'a and Contemporary Reformist Muslim Thought: An Examination*, *Maqasid Al-Shari'a and Contemporary Reformist Muslim Thought: An Examination*, 2014, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137319418; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); A Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach*, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach*, 2005, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203016770.

[9] S Syamsuddin, "Pendekatan Ma'nā-Cum-Maghzā: Paradigma, Prinsip, Dan Metode Penafsiran," *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Tafsir Di Nusantara* 6, no. 2 (2020): 217–40.

[10] K Çalişkan, "Types of Words (Alfāz) in Abū Bakr Al-Jassās' Approach to the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence (Usūl Al-Fiqh) and a Suggestion for a Diagrammatic Division," *Ankara Universitesi Ilahiyat Fakultesi Dergisi* 63, no. 2 (2022): 607–715, https://doi.org/10.33227/auifd.1052293.

imposition on Qur'anic studies but can be discussed as part of a longer Islamic conversation about meaning, context, and interpretive plurality.

A third trajectory concerns Indonesian tafsir, living Qur'an, and local reception. This scholarship has shown that Qur'anic interpretation in Indonesia is shaped by local languages, cultural forms, institutional settings, Sufi traditions, *pesantren* intellectual networks, state religious discourse, and transregional Islamic connections. Indonesian tafsir studies have identified developments from classical Malay-Indonesian interpretive traditions to modern thematic, contextual, and socially responsive forms of tafsir.[11] The Malay-Indonesian world has historically maintained strong intellectual connections with the Arab world while also developing distinctive regional modes of interpretation.[12] Studies of manuscripts such as *Hakikate Bismillah* further demonstrate how Qur'anic interpretation may synthesize Sufi metaphysics with Javanese cosmology, producing a culturally specific hermeneutical framework rather than merely reproducing Middle Eastern exegetical models.[13] These studies are valuable because they reveal the plurality and locality of Indonesian Qur'anic interpretation; however, their main concern is often historical, cultural, or reception-oriented rather than the methodological evaluation of contemporary journal articles.

A fourth trajectory examines contemporary thematic interpretation in Indonesia. Recent studies show that thematic exegesis has become a prominent mode of Qur'anic scholarship because it allows researchers to connect Qur'anic discourse with contemporary social problems. Kaltsum argues that Indonesian thematic interpretation has shifted interpretive authority beyond traditional scholars to include academics from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, while also developing methodological innovations that begin from social realities and seek applicative Qur'anic solutions rather than relying solely on normative textual exposition.[14] In this sense, thematic tafsir has enabled Qur'anic studies to address issues such as gender equality, human rights, public ethics, and social justice, sometimes in conversation with *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* frameworks.[15] Yet this same development also creates methodological risks. When verses are selectively mobilized to address contemporary issues, thematic tafsir can become a form of normative citation unless the researcher explains the criteria for selecting verses, the procedure of thematic synthesis, the role of tafsir sources, and the transition from textual meaning to contemporary application.

A fifth body of scholarship focuses on individual exegetes and models of contextual interpretation. Studies of M. Quraish Shihab, for instance, show that he emphasizes contextual reading rather than strict textual literalism, often integrating authentic Hadith while at times using weak Hadith or metaphorical interpretation to strengthen contextual meaning. Such findings illustrate the complexity of contemporary Indonesian tafsir: contextual interpretation is not simply a departure from tradition, but a negotiated method that combines textual attention, hadith material, linguistic interpretation, and social relevance. Similarly, studies of the *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* model show that Indonesian-Malay tafsir has long avoided purely literalist readings by incorporating historical and contextual elements such as *asbāb al-nuzūl* and classical Arabic sources to make interpretation accessible

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[11] L D N Aisa, "Tafsir Modern Di Indonesia Abad Ke-21: Identifikasi Karakteristik Produk Tafsir Pada Tahun 2001–2022," *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Tafsir Di Nusantara* 10, no. 2 (2024): 86–102, https://doi.org/10.32495/nun.v10i2.459; Islah Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Hermeneutika Hingga Ideologi* (Jakarta: Teraju, 2013); Majid Daneshgar, *Islamic Studies Today: Essays in Honor of Andrew Rippin* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Johanna Pink, *Muslim Qur'anic Interpretation Today* (London: Routledge, 2019).

[12] Daneshgar, *Islamic Studies Today: Essays in Honor of Andrew Rippin*.

[13] M Mauluddin et al., "Sufi Hermeneutics and Symbolic Tafsir in the Javanese Manuscript Hakikate Bismillah," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 26, no. 2 (2025): 413–43, https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v26i2.6315.

[14] L U Kaltsum and A S Amin, "The Development of Qur'anic Thematic Exegesis in Indonesia: Historical Landscape and Shifts of Authority," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 25, no. 2 (2024): 296–319, https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i2.5422.

[15] Arifinsyah, "Analisis Deskriptif Peta Konflik Umat Beragama DiSumatera Utara. Jurnal Ushuluddin," 2016, 1–23; Kaltsum and Amin, "The Development of Qur'anic Thematic Exegesis in Indonesia: Historical Landscape and Shifts of Authority."

to wider audiences. These studies contribute to the understanding of contextualism in Indonesian tafsir, but they do not fully resolve the methodological question of how contemporary academic articles should distinguish between contextual interpretation and selective textual legitimation.

The application of hermeneutics in Qur'anic interpretation has also generated significant debate. Critics argue that some modern approaches, especially those perceived as equating the Qur'an with ordinary literary texts, risk undermining its sacred status.[16] This criticism cannot simply be dismissed as anti-intellectual resistance; it points to a real methodological concern about how modern theories are adapted to Islamic textual studies. At the same time, rejecting hermeneutics altogether would obscure the fact that interpretation always involves language, context, readerly assumptions, and historical mediation. The debate therefore indicates the need for methodological rigor: innovation must be conceptually justified, while fidelity to tradition must not become a substitute for analytical procedure. Similar tensions appear in discussions of the Qur'an as a historical source, where scholars such as Mun'im Sirry navigate between traditionalist and revisionist positions to develop a balanced form of critical inquiry.[17] These debates show that contemporary Qur'anic studies requires neither uncritical traditionalism nor unrestricted revisionism, but transparent methodological reasoning.

Despite these important contributions, a significant gap remains. Existing studies have clarified the history of tafsir, mapped hermeneutical debates, explored Indonesian reception, analyzed individual exegetes, and discussed contextual interpretation. Less attention has been given to the methodological quality of contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic research articles themselves: how they construct arguments through Qur'anic citation, how they operationalize tafsir methods, how they integrate theory, and how they move from textual evidence to academic conclusion. This gap is crucial because the expansion of Qur'anic studies publications does not automatically guarantee methodological rigor. Indonesian journals now publish studies on living Qur'an, thematic tafsir, scientific interpretation, ecology, psychology, family ethics, digital culture, and public issues; yet the central methodological question remains insufficiently examined: do these articles employ Qur'anic verses as analytically examined data, or primarily as normative citations that validate pre-formulated claims?

The present study addresses this conceptual and methodological gap by evaluating the internal argumentative practices of contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship. Conceptually, it clarifies the distinction between normative citation**,** interpretive analysis**,** and critical Qur'anic scholarship. Methodologically, it examines how Qur'anic verses and tafsir references function within academic articles: whether they operate as data, evidence, authority, illustration, theological legitimation, or objects of critical analysis. Empirically, it analyzes selected Indonesian Qur'anic research articles published in the contemporary period, especially those appearing in Qur'anic studies, tafsir, and Islamic studies journals. The study does not assume that normative engagement with the Qur'an is academically inferior. Rather, it argues that normative commitment must be accompanied by explicit interpretive procedures if Qur'anic scholarship is to meet international standards of academic accountability.

The theoretical framework of this article is built on three interrelated perspectives. First, Rahman's double movement theory provides a model for assessing whether contemporary interpretation moves from present concerns to the historical-moral context of revelation and then returns to contemporary ethical application.[18] Second, Saeed's contextualist hermeneutics offers analytical tools for examining ethico-legal and socially relevant Qur'anic passages through historical

[16] N Z N Zainol, L A Majid, and M F Md Saad, "An Overview on Hermeneutics Method Application to the Quran by Muslim Thinkers," *International Journal of Engineering and Technology(UAE)* 7, no. 4 (2018): 167–70, https://doi.org/10.14419/ijet.v7i4.9.20643; Y Rafiqi, "Kritik Hermeneutik Dan Kontekstualisasi Ayat-Ayat Hukum," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 17, no. 1 (2017): 223–40, https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v17i1.6088.

[17] A Badruzaman, R Ahmadi, and S Siddik, "Mun'im Sirry's Middle Path: Bridging Revisionist and Traditionalist Perspectives in Qur'anic Scholarship," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 25, no. 2 (2024): 370–93, https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i2.5436.

[18] Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*.

context, textual hierarchy, moral values, and contemporary relevance.[19] Third, Abu Zayd's discourse hermeneutics frames Qur'anic meaning as mediated through language, culture, discourse, reception, and interpretive history.[20] These frameworks are appropriate because they challenge proof-texting without dismissing the normative authority of the Qur'an. In this study, they are used not to replace classical tafsir, but to evaluate whether contemporary research articles provide adequate interpretive mediation between Qur'anic citation and scholarly conclusion.

This article is guided by three research questions. First, how are Qur'anic verses and tafsir references used in contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship? Second, what methodological problems emerge when Qur'anic citations function as normative legitimation rather than as objects of critical analysis? Third, how can a critical-analytical framework strengthen methodological rigor in Indonesian Qur'anic studies without dismissing the normative authority of the Qur'an? Correspondingly, the objectives of the study are to identify patterns of normative citation in contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic research, evaluate the methodological limitations of such patterns, and formulate an analytical framework that integrates respect for Qur'anic normativity with academic standards of interpretation, evidence, and argumentation.

The academic significance of this study lies in its attempt to move the discussion beyond the binary question of whether Qur'anic studies should be normative or critical. Its more precise concern is how Qur'anic normativity can be translated into academically accountable analysis. The article's novelty lies in evaluating the internal argumentative practices of contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship rather than merely describing tafsir history, summarizing hermeneutical theory, or presenting thematic interpretations. By conceptualizing the movement from normative citation to critical analysis, this study contributes to the methodological refinement of Indonesian Qur'anic studies and offers a framework that is relevant to international debates on Islamic hermeneutics, textual authority, contextual interpretation, and the academic study of sacred texts.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative textual research design combining document analysis and qualitative content analysis to examine methodological problems in contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship. This design is appropriate because the study does not measure statistical frequency, but interprets how Qur'anic verses, tafsir references, theoretical frameworks, and methodological claims are used in academic argumentation. Since the data consist of published scholarly articles, the study follows document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing written materials and qualitative content analysis as a method for making valid inferences from texts within their contexts. The analysis is also informed by Mayring's rule-guided qualitative content analysis, especially its emphasis on category construction, systematic coding, and theoretically grounded interpretation.

The primary data consist of fourteen articles on contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic and tafsir studies published between 2020 and 2025 in journals specializing in Qur'anic Studies, tafsir studies, Islamic Studies, and related fields. This corpus is not intended to represent all Indonesian Qur'anic studies publications, since the field is extensive and dispersed across many journals. Instead, the study uses purposive corpus selection, in which sources are chosen according to their relevance to the research problem rather than through statistical sampling. The articles are treated as primary documentary data because the object of analysis is not only their themes, but also the methodological practices displayed in their arguments.

The articles were selected based on five criteria. First, each article places the Qur'an, tafsir, Qur'anic reception, or Qur'anic ethics at the center of analysis. Second, each article shows a discernible use of Qur'anic verses, tafsir references, hermeneutical theory, contextual interpretation, or thematic

[19] Duderija, "A Case Study of Patriarchy and Slavery: The Hermeneutical Importance of Qur'ānic Assumptions in the Development of a Values-Based and Purposive Qur'ān-Sunna Hermeneutic"; Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach*, 2005; Rois, Irfan, and Anam, "Islamic Hierarchy Of Value: Abdullah Saeed's Progressive Interpretation of the Qur'an."

[20] Abu Zayd, *Rethinking the Qur'an: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics*.

method. Third, the corpus represents diverse approaches, including modern tafsir, thematic tafsir, hermeneutics, living Qur'an, contextual reading, and the application of Qur'anic values to contemporary issues. Fourth, the corpus is limited to 2020–2025 publications to capture recent tendencies in Indonesian Qur'anic academic production. Fifth, each article is available in full text, allowing direct examination of citation practices, theoretical claims, methodological explanations, and analytical procedures.

Table 1. Primary Corpus and Analytical Function

No.	Primary Data	Research Focus	Function in the Analysis
1	Aisa, *Tafsir Modern di Indonesia Abad ke-21*	Five modern Indonesian tafsir works published between 2001 and 2022	Demonstrates the diversity of modern Indonesian tafsir and the problem of Qur'anic inner logic
2	Rosa, *Orientasi Penyusunan dan Wacana Kritis terhadap Tafsir Quran Tematik Moderasi Beragama Kementerian Agama*	Thematic tafsir on religious moderation produced by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs	Provides data on institutional tafsir, the *mauḍū'ī* method, and the problem of *asbāb al-nuzūl*
3	Kaltsum and Amin, *The Development of Qur'anic Thematic Exegesis in Indonesia*	Development of thematic Qur'anic exegesis in Indonesia	Provides data on the shift of interpretive authority, methodology, and the text-reality relationship
4	Mujahidin, Itmam, and Rofiq, *The Dynamic of Contextualization in Indonesian Qur'anic Tafsirs*	Comparative study of *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir al-Mishbāh*	Provides data on textual discipline and narrative flexibility in contextual interpretation
5	Bary and Zakirman, *Hermeneutika Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher sebagai Metode Tafsir Al-Qur'an*	Grammatical and psychological hermeneutics	Provides data on the integration of Western hermeneutics into Qur'anic interpretation
6	Firdausiyah, *Tafsir Modern Perspektif Mun'im Sirry dalam What's Modern about Modern Tafsir?*	*Tafsir al-Azhar* and the question of modern tafsir	Provides data on modernity, Hamka's tafsir, and contemporary tafsir discourse
7	Hudri, *Pembacaan Kontekstual Ayat "Berhukum dengan Hukum Allah"*	Contextual reading of political-religious Qur'anic verses	Provides data on contextual interpretation and counter-discourse to the idea of an Islamic state
8	Jendri (2020), *Aplikasi Teori Batas terhadap Poligami*	Muhammad Shahrur's limit theory and polygamy	Provides data on the use of contemporary theory in Qur'anic legal interpretation
9	Heriyanto, *Mystical Living Qur'an*	Social reception of an ancient Qur'anic manuscript	Provides data on living Qur'an and the shift from text to social practice
10	Mahtubah, *Resepsi Masyarakat Madura terhadap QS. al-Ikhlas*	Reception of QS al-Ikhlas in the Madurese *kompolan* tradition	Provides data on communal reception of a specific Qur'anic surah
11	Nurfadilah, *Ecological Kufr in Modern Era*	Ecological thematic interpretation	Provides data on the expansion of Qur'anic studies into environmental issues
12	Yanuar and Karim, *Tabayyun in the Digital Marketplace*	Qur'anic ethics and skincare overclaims in digital marketplaces	Provides data on the expansion of Qur'anic interpretation into digital economic ethics
13	Dwiyanti, Adim, and Muzakky, *Interpretations of Tafsir Scholars on Toxic Behavior in Family Life*	Tafsir and toxic behavior in modern family life	Provides data on the use of tafsir in addressing psychosocial family problems
14	Azzahra, Muzakky, and Misbah, *Spiritual Healing with Aswaja Ruqyah*	Qur'anic-based non-medical healing practice	Provides data on Qur'anic healing and contemporary religious practice

The use of fourteen articles does not imply that Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship is limited. It reflects the qualitative purpose of the study. This research does not conduct a bibliometric survey, but evaluates how selected articles use Qur'anic verses, tafsir materials, theories, and methods in constructing academic arguments. In qualitative textual research, analytical depth is more important than numerical size because an overly large corpus may weaken close analysis of argumentative structure, citation function, methodological operationalization, and the relationship between textual evidence and scholarly conclusions.

The corpus represents major tendencies in contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic studies. Aisa, Rosa, Kaltsum and Amin, Mujahidin, Itmam, Rofiq, and Firdausiyah represent modern and thematic tafsir. Bary and Zakirman, Hudri, and Jendri represent hermeneutics, contextual reading, and contemporary theory in legal and political-religious issues. Heriyanto and Mahtubah represent the living Qur'an and social reception. Nurfadilah, Yanuar and Karim, Dwiyanti, Adim, Muzakky, Azzahra, and Misbah show the expansion of Qur'anic studies into ecology, digital economy, family life, and spiritual healing. Thus, the corpus displays different modes of Qur'anic engagement: normative legitimation, tafsir object, social ethics, healing, digital ethical critique, and contextual political-legal interpretation.

The unit of analysis is not the article, but specific textual components within each article: the research problem, method section, use of Qur'anic verses, tafsir references, interpretive procedures, theoretical integration, and conclusions. This unit-based reading identifies whether Qur'anic verses function as normative proof, textual data, interpretive objects, ethical principles, illustrative references, or elements of critical analysis.

Data collection involved four steps. First, relevant articles were identified from Indonesian Qur'anic studies journals and indexed platforms. Second, each article was read in full to identify its focus, method, Qur'anic materials, tafsir references, theoretical framework, and conclusion. Third, analytical notes were produced for each article, focusing on how Qur'anic verses and tafsir materials were used. Fourth, relevant passages were coded according to methodological function.

The coding process combined deductive and inductive procedures. Deductively, initial categories were derived from Rahman's double movement theory, Saeed's contextualist approach, Abu Zayd's discourse hermeneutics, and al-Farmāwī's thematic tafsir procedure. Inductively, categories emerged from repeated reading of the corpus, especially direct proof-texting, weak operationalization of thematic tafsir, limited engagement with *asbāb al-nuzūl*, and insufficient connection between theory and textual analysis.

The analysis used seven coding categories: normative citation, interpretive mediation, methodological clarity, tafsir utilization, theoretical integration, contextual relevance, and argumentative accountability. The procedure consisted of descriptive mapping, methodological coding, interpretive analysis, and critical synthesis. Credibility was strengthened through source triangulation, theoretical triangulation, category checking, and argument traceability.

This study adapts qualitative content analysis into critical-analytical Qur'anic content analysis because the object is scholarly discourse about a sacred text, involving academic and theological dimensions. The method examines not only what themes appear, but also how Qur'anic authority is transformed into scholarly argument. Its limitation lies in its corpus-based and interpretive character: it does not represent all Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship or measure methodological problems statistically. Nevertheless, it is appropriate for assessing the textual and argumentative structure of contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Qur'anic Verses as Normative Legitimation in Contemporary Social Issues

The most fundamental finding of this study is that contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship frequently employs Qur'anic verses as normative legitimation for contemporary social issues, yet it does not always treat those verses as textual data requiring sustained linguistic, historical, intertextual, and hermeneutical analysis. This pattern appears across studies dealing with religious

moderation, ecology, digital commerce, family ethics, spiritual healing, polygamy, and state-religion relations. In these works, Qur'anic verses are often selected because they appear thematically relevant to a contemporary problem, but the analytical procedure connecting the verse to the modern issue is not always made explicit. The methodological issue, therefore, is not the normative use of the Qur'an itself. Within Islamic intellectual traditions, the Qur'an legitimately functions as a source of ethical, legal, and theological guidance. The problem emerges when Qur'anic citation becomes the endpoint of argumentation rather than the beginning of interpretive analysis.

The primary corpus shows that Indonesian Qur'anic studies has undergone a significant thematic expansion. Rosa's study of *Tafsir Quran Tematik Moderasi Beragama* published by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs is especially important because it examines an institutional tafsir designed within the state discourse of religious moderation. Rosa finds that this work adopts the *mauḍū'ī* method and an *adabī ijtimā'ī* orientation, but also identifies methodological weaknesses, especially its insufficient attention to linguistic elements constituting the concept of moderation and its tendency to obscure *asbāb al-nuzūl* because of the strong localization of its interpretive agenda.[21] This finding shows that thematic tafsir may function not only as an academic product, but also as a normative instrument for responding to ideological and social concerns, including radicalism and religious polarization. The case is analytically significant because it reveals how Qur'anic authority may be mobilized to stabilize a public ethical discourse without always providing a sufficiently transparent explanation of how the selected verses generate the intended normative conclusion.

A similar tendency appears in studies that connect Qur'anic discourse to contemporary applied ethics. Nurfadilah et al. use Qur'anic interpretation to formulate an ecological critique through the concept of ecological kufr.[22] Yanuar and Karim employ the Qur'anic concept of *tabayyun* to evaluate overclaims in the digital skincare marketplace.[23] Dwiyanti, Adim, and Muzakky discuss toxic behavior in modern family life through the interpretations of tafsir scholars.[24] Azzahra, Muzakky, and Misbah examine Qur'anic-based spiritual healing through the practice of Aswaja ruqyah.[25] These studies demonstrate the vitality of contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship: the Qur'an is no longer discussed only within conventional exegetical themes, but is brought into conversation with environmental ethics, digital capitalism, psychosocial family problems, and non-medical religious healing. Yet this expansion also intensifies a methodological risk. When a contemporary issue becomes the starting point of interpretation, the Qur'anic verse may be used primarily as a legitimating resource unless the researcher clearly explains the semantic field of the verse, the historical context of revelation, the relationship among relevant verses, the range of tafsir opinions, and the limits of applying the verse to a modern problem.

This tendency can be understood as a form of proof-texting, although it does not always appear in a crude literalist form. Proof-texting occurs when a scriptural passage is selected to support a claim without sufficient attention to textual complexity, interpretive plurality, or the broader moral structure of the Qur'an. The irony is that the classical exegetical tradition itself often preserved interpretive plurality rather than closing meaning too quickly. Studies of exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr show that classical tafsir frequently maintained the semantic openness of Qur'anic verses by recording

[21] Rosa, "Orientasi Penyusunan Dan Wacana Kritis Terhadap Tafsir Quran Tematik (TQT) Moderasi Beragama Kementerian Agama."

[22] Nurfadilah et al., "Ecological Kufr in Modern Era: A Thematic Interpretation and Its Environmental Implications."

[23] Yanuar and Karim, "Tabayyun in the Digital Marketplace: Quranic Ethics against Skincare Overclaims."

[24] Dwiyanti, Adim, and Muzakky, "Interpretations of Tafsir Scholars on Toxic Behavior in Family Life in the Modern Era."

[25] Azzahra, Muzakky, and Misbah, "Spiritual Healing with Aswaja Ruqyah: A Qur'anic-Based Non-Medical Approach."

multiple interpretive possibilities instead of reducing a verse to a single predetermined conclusion.[26] This suggests that a normative commitment to the Qur'an need not produce rigid proof-texting. On the contrary, a serious engagement with the tafsir tradition can support methodological openness, comparative interpretation, and awareness of semantic plurality.

From the perspective of Fazlur Rahman's double movement theory, the pattern identified in the corpus reflects the danger of atomistic reading. Rahman argues that Qur'anic interpretation should move from contemporary problems to the historical-moral context of revelation and then return to the present through the formulation of general moral principles.[27] Measured against this framework, the weakness of normative citation lies in the missing middle stage between text and application. A contemporary problem is identified, a relevant verse is cited, and a normative conclusion is drawn, but the interpretive movement that should connect historical meaning, moral principle, and contemporary application is often insufficiently articulated. The issue is not that scholars address modern social questions through the Qur'an; such engagement is central to the living relevance of Qur'anic interpretation. The issue is whether the argument demonstrates how the Qur'anic text has been interpreted before being applied.

Abdullah Saeed's contextualist approach sharpens this critique. Saeed argues that interpretation of ethico-legal passages requires attention to the hierarchy of Qur'anic values, distinguishing between historically contingent rulings and broader ethical objectives such as justice, compassion, dignity, and public welfare[28]. Later discussions of Saeed's framework similarly emphasize that Qur'anic interpretation should prioritize moral objectives over literalist proof-texting when addressing contemporary social realities.[29] In relation to the corpus, this means that studies on ecology, family ethics, digital transactions, and religious moderation should not merely cite verses as norms; they should clarify whether the verse is being used as a legal instruction, an ethical principle, a moral analogy, or a general value. Without this clarification, Qur'anic ethics risks being transformed into thematic citation rather than contextual reasoning.

The broader literature on Qur'anic social ethics reinforces this point. Studies of Qur'anic ethics frequently emphasize justice, coexistence, public welfare, and moral responsibility as central values for addressing contemporary social life.[30] Interpretations of peace and coexistence, for instance, highlight tolerance and mutual respect as Qur'anic imperatives, but such conclusions require interpretive mediation rather than simple citation of verses associated with peace.[31] Likewise, studies of da'wah ethics show that Qur'anic communication requires logical, moral, and contextual sensitivity, not merely the invocation of scriptural authority. These works help clarify the methodological distinction at stake in this study: Qur'anic social ethics becomes academically persuasive when it demonstrates how ethical principles are derived, not merely when it asserts that the Qur'an supports a certain social value.

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[26] M Erebih and A Almanna, "Between Text and Commentary: Translator Intervention and Semantic Openness in English Translations of the Qurʾān," *Cogent Arts and Humanities* 13, no. 1 (2026), https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2026.2662804.

[27] Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*.

[28] A Saeed, *Reading the Qur'an in the Twenty-First Century: A Contextualist Approach*, *Reading the Qur'an in the Twenty-First Century: A Contextualist Approach*, 2013, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315870922; Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*.

[29] Rois, Irfan, and Anam, "Islamic Hierarchy Of Value: Abdullah Saeed's Progressive Interpretation of the Qur'an."

[30] Rois, Irfan, and Anam; Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[31] A Kuswaya and M Ali, "The Concept of Peace in the Qur'an: A Socio-Thematic Analysis of Muslims' Contestation in Salatiga, Indonesia," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2021): 73–102, https://doi.org/10.21043/QIJIS.V9I1.10483; L Takim, "Peace and War in the Qur'an and Juridical Literature: A Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 38, no. 2 (2011): 137–57, https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-79959294301&partnerID=40&md5=def2156f10574bd025d8ad7688a576dc.

Thematic tafsir occupies an important but ambivalent position in this pattern. On the one hand, *tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī* provides a legitimate method for gathering Qur'anic verses around a particular theme and deriving coherent principles from them. Recent applications of thematic tafsir to governance, *maqāṣid* al-Qur'an, and disaster management show its capacity to connect Qur'anic authority with practical ethical frameworks.[32] On the other hand, thematic tafsir becomes methodologically weak when the theme determines the conclusion in advance and the selected verses are used only to validate that conclusion. The problem is therefore not thematic interpretation as a method, but insufficient operationalization of the method. A rigorous thematic study must explain how verses are selected, how semantic relations are established, how apparently diverse verses are synthesized, and how classical and contemporary tafsir are evaluated.

The negotiation of Qur'anic authority in social and political contexts further illustrates why normative citation requires careful analysis. Debates over terms such as *ulū al-amr* show that Qur'anic authority has historically been contested, interpreted, and redefined in relation to political power, communal order, and scholarly authority.[33] Such debates demonstrate that even terms with clear normative weight are not self-explanatory. Their meaning depends on exegetical history, legal reasoning, political context, and interpretive authority. This is directly relevant to Indonesian studies that cite Qur'anic verses in debates over governance, religious moderation, or state-religion relations. When political or ethical conclusions are drawn from Qur'anic language, the analysis must account for the historical contestation of meaning rather than presenting the verse as though it automatically supports a single contemporary position.

The finding also refines Aisa's study of modern Indonesian tafsir. Aisa shows that modern Indonesian tafsir tends to emphasize the Qur'an's function as guidance and its relevance to changing social contexts, but not all works explicitly display the inner logic of the Qur'an or integrate local culture comprehensively in their interpretive procedure.[34] This supports the present study's argument that Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship is strong in social responsiveness but uneven in methodological explicitness. In other words, the field is not lacking contemporary relevance; rather, its main challenge is to ensure that relevance is produced through accountable interpretation. This is also consistent with Pink's broader argument that modern Qur'anic interpretation is shaped by media, genealogies, and interpretive communities, not by textual meaning alone.[35] Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship must therefore be read as part of a wider ecology of religious authority, public ethics, academic production, and social demand.

This sub-section answers the first part of the research question by showing how Qur'anic verses and tafsir references are used in contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship. The dominant pattern is not the absence of interpretation, but the frequent compression of interpretation into normative citation. The studies examined here demonstrate a clear movement toward contemporary social engagement, yet they also reveal that the movement from verse to conclusion often requires stronger analytical mediation. The central methodological implication is that Qur'anic verses should not function merely as textual confirmation of a pre-formulated social argument. They should be treated as interpretive data whose meaning must be established through linguistic analysis, historical

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[32] T A A Abu-Alhaj, M A Norasid, and S M H Al-Siyabi, "Governance; Its Concept, Foundations and Practical Implications: A Contemporary Qur'anic Maqasidic Study," *AlBayan* 23, no. 1 (2025): 101–29, https://doi.org/10.1163/22321969-20250168; A Arief et al., "Aligning Fiqh Disaster with Indonesia's Management Disaster Policy: A Maqāṣid Methodology Review," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 19, no. 1 (2025): 101–16, https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v19i1.12872.

[33] M Sirry, "Who Are Those in Authority? Early Muslim Exegesis of the Qur'anic Ulū'l-Amr," *Religions* 12, no. 7 (2021), https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070483; O M Dar, "Obedience To 'Political Authority' (Ulū Al-Amr): A Discursive Analysis Of Modern South Asian Exegesis," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 1 (2022): 142–67, https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v7i1.669.

[34] Aisa, "Tafsir Modern Di Indonesia Abad Ke-21: Identifikasi Karakteristik Produk Tafsir Pada Tahun 2001–2022."

[35] Pink, *Muslim Qur'anic Interpretation Today*.

contextualization, tafsir comparison, and theoretical justification. Thus, the core finding of this sub-section is that the vitality of Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship lies in its engagement with contemporary social issues, while its main methodological vulnerability lies in the tendency to let normative authority substitute for critical analysis.

Methodological Ambiguity in the Operationalization of Tafsir Methods

The main methodological tension revealed by the corpus is not the absence of method in contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship, but the unstable operationalization of method: many studies name an approach—such as *library research*, descriptive-analytical analysis, *tafsīr mauḍū'ī*, comparative tafsir, living Qur'an, or hermeneutics—without always clarifying how that approach governs the selection of verses, the use of tafsir sources, the categorization of evidence, the interpretation of meaning, and the validation of conclusions. This finding places the study within a broader debate in Qur'anic studies concerning whether methodological terminology functions as an analytical procedure or merely as an academic label. The issue is especially important because methodological ambiguity weakens the capacity of Qur'anic scholarship to distinguish between a disciplined interpretive process and a thematic presentation supported by scriptural citations.

This finding refines existing discussions on the instability of exegetical principles in contemporary Qur'anic studies. Recent scholarship has noted that ambiguity emerges when interpretive frameworks expand without clear epistemological boundaries, as seen in the uncontrolled proliferation of *qawāʿid al-tafsīr* and the confusion between exegetical principles and principles borrowed from other disciplines.[36] The present corpus supports this concern, but it shifts the focus from abstract theory to the practical level of article-writing. The methodological weakness is not simply that scholars borrow concepts from different fields, but that the borrowed method is not always translated into a clear sequence of analytical operations. In this sense, methodological ambiguity appears less as a theoretical disagreement over the legitimacy of certain approaches and more as a procedural problem in the way those approaches are enacted in published research.

The clearest example appears in the use of *tafsīr mauḍū'ī*. Classical thematic tafsir is not merely the act of discussing a theme through selected Qur'anic verses; it requires a structured procedure: identifying the theme, collecting relevant verses, considering their contexts of revelation, examining lexical and semantic relations, observing *munāsabah*, comparing exegetical opinions, and deriving a synthetic conclusion. This understanding is consistent with the classical formulation of thematic tafsir associated with al-Farmāwī and with later discussions that define *mauḍū'ī* as the collective analysis of thematically related verses to derive coherent Qur'anic principles.[37] Yet the corpus shows that in some contemporary articles, "thematic" often means that a social topic is linked to several Qur'anic verses, without sufficient explanation of how the verses were selected, whether counter-relevant verses were considered, or how the synthesis was produced.

Rosa's analysis of *Tafsir Quran Tematik Moderasi Beragama* provides a particularly important case because it examines not merely a thematic text, but an institutional tafsir produced within the discourse of religious moderation. Rosa shows that the work adopts the *mauḍū'ī* method and an *adabī*

[36] A Rokhim, S Fuad, and C Sahin, "Qawāʿid Al Tafsīr As An Epistemological Model For Valid Qur'anic Interpretation: A Comparative Analysis Of Marāh Labīd And Al-Miṣbāḥ," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 23, no. 2 (2025): 696–732, https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v23i2.1488; N.E.M.B. Naji, T A A Abu-Alhaj, and M Abdullah, "The Theoretical Grounding and Conceptual Refinement of Tafsir Principles: A Critical Study," *Quranica* 17, no. 1 Special Issue 13 (2025): 1–17, https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-105005286830&partnerID=40&md5=73b62bbd02160cb1a91491a854ea7695.

[37] al-Farmawī, *Al-Bidāyah Fī Al-Tafsīr Al-Maudhu'Ī*; I M Abrorov et al., "Tafsir Application in the Customs and Rules and Social Behavior of the Various Society," *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology* 9 (2020): 2427–33, https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-4409.2020.09.294; A F Muchlis, D Larasati, and S Triyadi, "Reaching The Understanding Of The Green Building Concept In Islamic Value: Thematic Tafseer Study," *Journal of Islamic Architecture* 6, no. 4 (2021): 321–30, https://doi.org/10.18860/jia.v6i4.12742; M Tajab, A Madjid, and M Hidayati, "Psychology of Patience in Al-MisbĀh Exegesis," *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews* 7, no. 5 (2019): 1221–30, https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.75161.

ijtimā'ī orientation, yet it remains vulnerable to methodological problems: it does not sufficiently anticipate the linguistic elements that form the theme of moderation, and it tends to blur *asbāb al-nuzūl* because of the dense localization of its interpretive content.[38] This finding demonstrates that the declaration of a thematic method does not itself guarantee methodological rigor. What matters is whether the method is operationalized through identifiable procedures of verse selection, linguistic analysis, contextual placement, and thematic synthesis. The case also shows that institutional relevance may intensify the need for methodological clarity, because tafsir produced for public policy or social cohesion can easily transform Qur'anic interpretation into normative messaging if its analytical steps remain underdeveloped.

The study by Kaltsum and Amin further complicates the debate by showing that thematic tafsir in Indonesia has become a dominant modern method while also undergoing a shift in interpretive authority and methodological orientation. They identify a movement from models that begin with the Qur'an and move toward ideal-normative exposition to models that begin with social reality and seek applicative Qur'anic solutions.[39] This supports the broader observation that *mauḍū'ī* tafsir is adaptable to modern ethical, social, and political issues, including patience, environmental ethics, religious pluralism, interfaith harmony, governance, and disaster management.[40] However, the present study adds that such adaptability can also become a source of ambiguity. When the point of departure shifts from the Qur'anic text to a contemporary problem, the method must explain more carefully how the movement from social reality to Qur'anic principle is justified. Without such explanation, thematic tafsir risks becoming an applicative discourse that is socially relevant but methodologically underdetermined.

This debate is not limited to thematic tafsir. The use of hermeneutics in the corpus reveals a second form of methodological ambiguity: the tension between conceptual borrowing and epistemological compatibility. Bary and Zakirman's study of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics as a method of Qur'anic interpretation offers a more explicit methodological attempt by linking grammatical hermeneutics to Qur'anic Arabic and psychological hermeneutics to the study of *asbāb al-nuzūl* and authorial experience.[41] The article is significant because it does not merely cite hermeneutics as a fashionable theoretical term; it attempts to explain how Schleiermacher's categories might be applied to Qur'anic interpretation. Yet this attempt also exposes a deeper theoretical problem. The concept of "authorial psychology" in modern hermeneutics cannot be transferred directly to the Qur'an without addressing the theological distinction between human authorship and divine revelation. In this respect, the finding expands Abu Zayd's argument that the Qur'an must be studied as a text embedded in language, culture, communication, and interpretive history, while also showing that such textualization requires careful epistemological justification.[42]

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[38] Rosa, "Orientasi Penyusunan Dan Wacana Kritis Terhadap Tafsir Quran Tematik (TQT) Moderasi Beragama Kementerian Agama."

[39] Kaltsum and Amin, "The Development of Qur'anic Thematic Exegesis in Indonesia: Historical Landscape and Shifts of Authority."

[40] Muchlis, Larasati, and Triyadi, "Reaching The Understanding Of The Green Building Concept In Islamic Value: Thematic Tafseer Study"; Tajab, Madjid, and Hidayati, "Psychology of Patience in Al-MisbĀh Exegesis"; N A Febriani, "Adult Religious Morality Development from the Quranic Perspective: Strategies to Overcome Islamophobia and Christianophobia," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (2022), https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7398; M I Muchtar and S Amin, "Pluralism As Divine Ordinance: Ahmad Sonhaji's Contextual Tafsîr and the Construction of Muslim Identity in Singapore," *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 49, no. 2 (2025): 493–515, https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v49i2.1476; Anita Marwing and Yunus, *Perempuan Islam Dalam*, 2021; Arief et al., "Aligning Fiqh Disaster with Indonesia's Management Disaster Policy: A Maqāṣid Methodology Review"; Abu-Alhaj, Norasid, and Al-Siyabi, "Governance; Its Concept, Foundations and Practical Implications: A Contemporary Qur'anic Maqasidic Study."

[41] Bary and Zakirman, "Hermeneutika Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher Sebagai Metode Tafsir Al-Qur'an: Kajian Ayat Ikhlāṣ, Jilbāb, Sayyārah, Dan Al-Hudā."

[42] Abu Zayd, *Rethinking the Qur'an: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics*.

The ambiguity surrounding hermeneutics also resonates with broader debates about indirect, symbolic, or layered meanings in tafsir. Sufi tafsir, for example, has long wrestled with the problem of *ishāra*, where interpreters negotiate between revealing and concealing meanings, producing what has been described as a paradox of expression.[43] This example matters because it shows that ambiguity is not always a methodological defect; in certain interpretive traditions, ambiguity may be a recognized feature of meaning-making. However, the ambiguity identified in the present corpus is different. It is not the productive ambiguity of symbolic interpretation, but the procedural ambiguity that arises when a method is named without sufficient explanation of how it regulates analysis. The distinction is crucial: Qur'anic scholarship can acknowledge semantic depth and interpretive plurality while still requiring clarity about analytical steps.

The findings therefore both support and challenge existing scholarship on tafsir methodology. They support studies that call for clearer epistemological standards, especially through *qawāʿid al-tafsīr*, in order to ensure interpretive validity and consistency.[44] They also support studies that emphasize the need to combine textual and contextual analysis, since classical and contemporary tafsir often derive meaning through linguistic, theological, historical, and social reasoning rather than through citation alone.[45] At the same time, the findings challenge any assumption that the adoption of recognized methods—whether *mauḍūʿī*, contextual, comparative, hermeneutical, or living Qur'an—is sufficient evidence of scholarly rigor. A method becomes academically meaningful only when it structures the entire research process, from the formation of the research problem to the selection of sources, the interpretation of evidence, and the construction of conclusions.

This point is also relevant to emerging methodological discussions in digital Qur'anic studies. Recent proposals for using artificial intelligence in tafsir suggest that computational tools can assist semantic matching, thematic categorization, and content verification against authoritative sources.[46] Such developments may help reduce certain forms of inconsistency, especially in identifying relevant verses or cross-checking tafsir materials. Yet they do not eliminate the deeper hermeneutical problem: tools can assist operationalization, but they cannot replace the need for explicit interpretive reasoning. Similarly, holistic frameworks such as the Holistic Scientific Exegesis Framework seek to integrate revelation, reason, and empirical observation in a balanced model of interpretation.[47] These developments are methodologically promising, but the present study suggests that their value depends on whether they specify how concepts are translated into analytical procedures rather than remaining broad integrative ideals.

Comparative tafsir studies reinforce the same point. Research comparing classical and modern tafsir approaches, such as studies of Elmalılı and Tantawi, shows how rational-theological reasoning

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[43] B İzmirli, "An Overview of Ṣūfī Tafsīr (Exegesis) Tradition From the Angle of (Bayān)- Concealment Paradox," *Cumhuriyet Ilahiyat Dergisi* 24, no. 3 (2020): 1355–73, https://doi.org/10.18505/cuid.773660.

[44] Naji, Abu-Alhaj, and Abdullah, "The Theoretical Grounding and Conceptual Refinement of Tafsir Principles: A Critical Study"; Rokhim, Fuad, and Sahin, "Qawāʿid Al Tafsīr As An Epistemological Model For Valid Qur'anic Interpretation: A Comparative Analysis Of Marāh Labīd And Al-Miṣbāḥ."

[45] B Demircigil, "The Conceptualization of Jurisprudential Exegesis as the Intersection of Tafsir and Fiqh: A Critical Approach," *Religions* 16, no. 2 (2025), https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16020254; A T Junaedi et al., "Digital Culture Revolution in Improving Firm Performance in Indonesia," *Journal of System and Management Sciences* 14, no. 1 (2024): 452–70, https://doi.org/10.33168/JSMS.2024.0126.

[46] S Al-Azani, S Abudalfa, and H Samma, "A Comprehensive Review of Artificial Intelligence in Qur'anic Research: Trends, Methods, Challenges, and Future Directions," *Information Processing and Management* 63, no. 7 (2026), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2026.104870; M S B Sahimi et al., "Preserving the Authenticity of Quranic Exegesis Through Artificial Intelligence: A Proposed Framework for Digital Verification," *Quranica* 17, no. 2 (2025): 325–44, https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-105018592981&partnerID=40&md5=0f97d0de1636bddbe68eca85e15581b6.

[47] N Azlan, M Z Mohd Yusoff, and S B Ariffin, "Towards A Holistic Framework For Scientific Exegesis: A Comparative Methodological Study Of Elmalili M. Hamdi Yazir And Tantawi Jawhari," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, no. 2 (2026), https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v11i2.1123.

and empirical-reformist interpretation can be integrated in different ways.[48] Such comparison demonstrates that methodological rigor does not require a single uniform model; rather, it requires transparency regarding the assumptions and procedures of the chosen model. The Indonesian corpus confirms this insight. The problem is not that scholars use different methods, nor that they adapt methods to different objects. The problem is that the relationship between method, data, and conclusion is often insufficiently visible. This reduces the reader's ability to evaluate whether a conclusion emerges from disciplined analysis or from a normative position supported by selective citation.

The methodological implication is clear: articles that invoke descriptive, thematic, comparative, contextual, living Qur'an, or hermeneutical approaches must explain at least five elements. First, they must identify the criteria by which Qur'anic verses or tafsir materials are selected. Second, they must state which tafsir sources are used and why they are relevant. Third, they must describe the technique of textual analysis, whether linguistic, historical, thematic, comparative, receptional, or discourse based. Fourth, they must explain how differences among exegetes are handled. Fifth, they must show how conclusions are derived from the analyzed materials. Without these elements, method becomes a formal requirement rather than an epistemic instrument.

This sub-section strengthens the originality of the article by repositioning the debate from the choice of method to the operationalization of method. Existing scholarship has discussed the value of thematic tafsir, contextual interpretation, hermeneutics, *qawāʿid al-tafsīr*, digital tools, and holistic frameworks. The present study contributes by showing that methodological rigor in contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship depends less on naming an accepted approach than on demonstrating how that approach governs interpretive practice. The critical issue, therefore, is not whether a study claims to be thematic, contextual, hermeneutical, comparative, or digital, but whether its method can be traced through the movement from Qur'anic text to scholarly conclusion.

The Tension between Textual Fidelity and Contextual Relevance

The qualitative content analysis used in this study reveals that the tension between textual fidelity and contextual relevance is not simply a theoretical dispute in Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship, but a concrete methodological problem that appears in the way articles move—or fail to move—from Qur'anic wording to contemporary application. By examining how selected studies construct their arguments, this analysis shows that contextualization is not a single interpretive act. It may take the form of close adherence to the textual structure, narrative expansion, socio-political reframing, local cultural translation, or ethical abstraction. The distinctive contribution of this approach lies in showing that the problem is not whether an interpretation is "textual" or "contextual," but whether the article makes visible the analytical route by which textual meaning becomes contextually relevant.

The comparison between *Tafsir al-Azhar* and *Tafsir al-Mishbāh* in the study by Mujahidin, Itmam, and Rofiq provides the clearest evidence of this tension. Their analysis shows that both Hamka and M. Quraish Shihab contextualize the Qur'anic story of Moses for Indonesian readers, yet they do so through different interpretive styles. *Tafsir al-Mishbāh* is described as more disciplined in following the textual meaning of the verses, aligning literal meanings with divine laws and universal principles, whereas *Tafsir al-Azhar* is more flexible in narrative development, using storytelling to make Qur'anic lessons more cohesive, accessible, and socially resonant.[49] Both tafsirs adapt the story of Moses to address ethical concerns such as human arrogance, struggle against domination, hard work, and practical intelligence, but they differ in how they balance textual restraint and moral actualization.[50] This finding is significant because it shows that contextual interpretation does not necessarily mean abandoning textual fidelity; rather, it involves different degrees of mediation between textual form, narrative structure, ethical meaning, and the needs of the reading community.

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[48] Azlan, Mohd Yusoff, and Ariffin.

[49] Mujahidin, Itmam, and Rofiq, "The Dynamic of Contextualization in Indonesian Qura`Anic Tafsirs: A Comparative Study of Tafsir Al-Azhar And Tafsir Al-Mishbāh on The Story of The Prophet Moses."

[50] Mujahidin, Itmam, and Rofiq.

This methodological insight would be difficult to capture through a purely descriptive history of Indonesian tafsir. A historical approach might classify Hamka and Shihab as modern Indonesian exegetes, while a thematic approach might identify the shared moral lessons of the Moses narrative. The present analytical approach, however, shows how their interpretive differences produce different models of contextualization. Shihab's closer textual discipline gives his tafsir a stronger claim to semantic restraint but may limit narrative expansiveness. Hamka's flexible narrative style enhances communicative force and cultural accessibility but raises questions about the boundaries of exegetical expansion. The methodological contribution, therefore, is to show that contextual relevance must be evaluated not only by whether a tafsir speaks to contemporary concerns, but by how it manages the boundary between textual meaning and interpretive extension.

The same tension appears in studies dealing with politically sensitive Qur'anic interpretation. Hudri's discussion of contextual readings of verses on "judging by God's law" in relation to narratives opposing the idea of an Islamic state in Indonesia shows that political-religious verses cannot be adequately interpreted outside their historical, ideological, and discursive contexts.[51] The value of this study lies in its attempt to move beyond political proof-texting. Rather than allowing verses about divine judgment to function as direct ideological slogans, contextual analysis asks how such verses have been interpreted, mobilized, and recontextualized in debates over statehood, law, and religious legitimacy. This finding demonstrates the importance of interpretive mediation: a politically charged verse must be examined through its textual setting, exegetical history, and contemporary discursive use before it can be responsibly connected to modern political claims.

Jendri's study on the application of Muhammad Shahrur's limit theory to polygamy presents another version of the same problem. The issue of polygamy requires direct engagement with Qur'anic wording, classical legal interpretation, linguistic analysis, and contemporary social realities surrounding gender, family, and justice (Jendri, 2020). The use of Shahrur's theory opens a space for re-reading legal verses through a modern conceptual framework, but it also requires methodological discipline. If Shahrur's theory is used merely to confirm a predetermined position, the analysis remains normatively driven even when it appears theoretically sophisticated. The methodological question is whether the article distinguishes clearly between classical normative tafsir, Shahrur's linguistic and legal reconstruction, and the social implications of applying such a theory in contemporary Indonesian debates. This case shows that theory can sharpen contextual interpretation only when it is used as an analytical instrument, not as a substitute for textual reasoning.

The method used in this study also reveals that contextual relevance in Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship is not limited to social ethics or legal reform; it is often mediated through local culture, spiritual symbolism, and institutional authority. The study of the *Hakikate Bismillah* manuscript, for example, shows how Qur'anic phrases such as *Bismillah* can be interpreted through a synthesis of Sufi metaphysics and Javanese cosmology, producing a symbolic and spiritual hermeneutic oriented toward inner reflection and spiritual awareness.[52] Similarly, Supriyanto's discussion of Misbah Mustafa's *Tafsir al-Iklil* shows how Islamic teachings may be articulated in dialogue with Javanese traditions, portraying Islam as a comprehensive way of life that can harmonize with local cultural practices (Supriyanto, 2024). These examples expand the meaning of contextual relevance: context is not only modern social problem-solving, but also linguistic locality, symbolic imagination, cultural memory, and spiritual pedagogy.

State-sponsored tafsir further complicates the relationship between text and context. Studies of Indonesia's *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya* show that official tafsir can play a socio-political role in promoting religious pluralism and addressing interfaith relations while balancing inclusivity with doctrinal

[51] Hudri, "Pembacaan Kontekstual Ayat 'Berhukum Dengan Hukum Allah': Narasi Kontra NKRI Bersyariah."

[52] Mauluddin et al., "Sufi Hermeneutics and Symbolic Tafsir in the Javanese Manuscript Hakikate Bismillah."

orthodoxy.[53] This demonstrates that contextual relevance is sometimes mediated by institutional agendas rather than by individual exegetical creativity alone. The state does not merely transmit Qur'anic interpretation; it participates in shaping the public function of tafsir. The analytical approach of this article makes this visible by asking not only what conclusion an interpretation reaches, but also how institutional location, public policy, and cultural dynamics shape the movement from Qur'anic text to social application.

The findings also clarify the methodological value and limits of contextual approaches such as *maqāṣidī* tafsir. Objective-based exegesis seeks to bridge classical hermeneutics with modern educational and social needs by emphasizing the higher purposes of the Qur'an, while maintaining its ethical and spiritual orientation.[54] This approach is valuable because it prevents contextualization from becoming arbitrary; it asks interpreters to connect contemporary applications to identifiable Qur'anic objectives. Yet the corpus suggests that *maqāṣidī* reasoning, like other contextual methods, requires operational clarity. It is not enough to claim that an interpretation serves justice, welfare, or harmony. The researcher must show how those objectives are derived from the text, how they relate to tafsir tradition, and how they justify a particular contemporary application.

This is where the need for epistemological standards becomes especially apparent. The absence of clear standards in tafsir has contributed to methodological inconsistency, while frameworks such as *qawā'id al-tafsīr* seek to preserve coherence by balancing textual understanding with socio-cultural awareness.[55] The present study supports this concern but specifies its relevance in the Indonesian context: the more Qur'anic studies engages with modern issues, local cultures, and institutional agendas, the more it requires visible interpretive rules. Textual fidelity without contextual awareness may produce rigid interpretation; contextual relevance without methodological control may produce associative or instrumental readings. The contribution of this article is to show that methodological rigor lies in making the transition between these poles explicit.

The multilingual dimension of Indonesian tafsir education further illustrates the practical complexity of interpretive mediation. Translanguaging practices involving Arabic, Indonesian, and English can enhance comprehension and critical engagement, but they also expose implicit linguistic hierarchies and the need for structured multilingual pedagogy.[56] This point is relevant because textual fidelity often depends on access to Arabic semantic structures, while contextual relevance frequently requires translation into Indonesian social, cultural, and academic vocabularies. The movement from Arabic Qur'anic language to Indonesian interpretation, and increasingly to English-language academic discourse, is not neutral. It shapes how concepts are understood, which meanings are foregrounded, and how arguments are made legible to different scholarly communities.

The findings therefore extend Pink's argument that contemporary tafsir is shaped by media, genealogies, and interpretive communities.[57] In the Indonesian case, meaning is shaped not only by the Qur'anic text and individual exegete, but also by state institutions, Islamic universities, *pesantren* traditions, local manuscripts, Javanese and Malay-Indonesian cultural formations, multilingual education, journal publication, and public debates. The methodological contribution of this article is to show that textual fidelity and contextual relevance should not be treated as opposing categories. They are better understood as interpretive pressures that must be negotiated through explicit analytical procedures.

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[53] A Y Mursyid and A Nahdiyati, "State-Sponsored Quranic Exegesis: A Comparative Analysis of Turkiye's and Indonesia's Official Tafsir," *AlBayan* 22, no. 3 (2024): 439–68, https://doi.org/10.1163/22321969-20240159.

[54] Z A Majid et al., "The Epistemic Dialects of Tafsir Maqasidi: Application, Fragmentation and Integration in Urban Islamic Education," *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 16, no. 2 (2026): 342–56, https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2026-0299.

[55] Ahmad Rokhim, *Qawa'id Al-Tafsir Dan Validitas Interpretasi*, 2025.

[56] U D Rostandi, F Rohandy, and A Wasik, "Translanguaging Practices among English, Indonesian, and Arabic: Enhancing a Holistic Approach to Tafsir in an Indonesian Interpretation Classroom," *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 15, no. 1 (2025): 224–35, https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v15i1.80705.

[57] Pink, *Muslim Qur'anic Interpretation Today: Media, Genealogies and Interpretive Communities*.

The strength of the approach used here is that it exposes the hidden movement between text and context within contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship. It can identify whether an article preserves semantic restraint, expands the narrative for moral communication, invokes local culture, applies a modern theory, or reframes a verse through political and institutional discourse. Its limitation is that it evaluates published textual arguments rather than the full social process behind their production; it does not interview authors, editors, or interpretive communities. Nevertheless, for the purpose of assessing methodological rigor in academic articles, this approach is appropriate because it focuses precisely on how arguments are constructed and justified in scholarly writing. This sub-section therefore shows that the tension between textual fidelity and contextual relevance is not a weakness to be eliminated, but a methodological condition that must be made explicit. The article advances the debate by demonstrating that contextualization becomes academically persuasive only when the route from Qur'anic wording to contemporary meaning is traceable, disciplined, and theoretically accountable.

From Normative Citation to Critical-Analytical Qur'anic Scholarship

The broader theoretical implication of this study is that the methodological strengthening of Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship does not require abandoning Qur'anic normativity, but reconfiguring it as an object of disciplined interpretation, analytical mediation, and accountable scholarly argumentation. The findings from the corpus show that the central issue is not a simple opposition between "normative" and "critical" approaches. Rather, the more precise problem concerns how normative sources are selected, interpreted, compared, contextualized, and translated into academic claims. This distinction is crucial because it avoids two reductive positions: treating Qur'anic normativity as if it were automatically sufficient for scholarly argument, or if critical analysis must suspend the Qur'an's normative force altogether.

The corpus points to three recurring modes of Qur'anic use in contemporary Indonesian scholarship. The first is the use of verses as normative legitimation, in which Qur'anic citations support moral, social, legal, or theological claims. This mode appears in studies of ecology, family ethics, religious moderation, digital commerce, and spiritual healing. The second is the use of verses as objects of interpretation, in which Qur'anic passages are examined through tafsir, language, context, comparison, or hermeneutical theory. This pattern is visible in studies such as Bary and Zakirman, Rosa, and Mujahidin, Itmam, and Rofiq.[58] The third, and methodologically strongest, is the use of verses as the center of critical-analytical inquiry, where Qur'anic citations are not merely quoted or explained but placed within methodological debate, tafsir comparison, social context, theoretical reflection, and argumentative evaluation. The contribution of this study lies in making these distinctions explicit. It shows that the same Qur'anic verse may function very differently depending on whether it is treated as authority, evidence, data, object of interpretation, or site of theoretical contestation.

This distinction extends current scholarship on Indonesian thematic interpretation. Kaltsum and Amin show that thematic Qur'anic interpretation in Indonesia has shifted from idealistic-normative frameworks toward applicative-solutive models that begin with contemporary social realities.[59] The present study supports that finding but adds a methodological qualification: the shift toward social applicability does not itself guarantee analytical rigor. A thematic study may be socially responsive while remaining methodologically weak if it does not explain the criteria for verse selection, the procedure of thematic synthesis, the role of tafsir authorities, and the movement from textual meaning to contemporary relevance. In this sense, the article refines the discussion of thematic tafsir by

[58] Bary and Zakirman, "Hermeneutika Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher Sebagai Metode Tafsir Al-Qur'an: Kajian Ayat Ikhlāṣ, Jilbāb, Sayyārah, Dan Al-Hudā"; Rosa, "Orientasi Penyusunan Dan Wacana Kritis Terhadap Tafsir Quran Tematik (TQT) Moderasi Beragama Kementerian Agama"; Mujahidin, Itmam, and Rofiq, "The Dynamic of Contextualization in Indonesian Qura`Anic Tafsirs: A Comparative Study of Tafsir Al-Azhar And Tafsir Al-Mishbāh on The Story of The Prophet Moses."

[59] Kaltsum and Amin, "The Development of Qur'anic Thematic Exegesis in Indonesia: Historical Landscape and Shifts of Authority."

arguing that the decisive issue is not whether interpretation begins from text or context, but whether the interpretive movement between the two is visible, justified, and critically controlled.

The same point applies to modern Indonesian tafsir more broadly. Aisa's study shows that twenty-first-century Indonesian tafsir is formally and thematically diverse, ranging from *Tafsir al-Misbah* and *Tafsir Inspirasi* to *Tafsir Qur'an per Kata*, *Pesan-pesan Al-Qur'an*, and *Tafsir Ringkas Al-Qur'an al-Karim*. These works commonly emphasize the Qur'an's function as guidance, use increasingly systematic writing techniques such as footnotes, and respond to changing social contexts; however, not all of them explicitly display the inner logic of the Qur'an or integrate local culture comprehensively within their interpretive procedures.[60] This finding reinforces the argument that Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship is not stagnant in theme or form. Its challenge lies in uneven methodological depth. The problem is not insufficient relevance, but insufficient articulation of how relevance is derived from textual, historical, and exegetical analysis.

The proposed model of critical-analytical Qur'anic scholarship builds on this diagnosis. It consists of six interrelated components. First, textual selection transparency requires authors to explain why certain verses are selected and whether other relevant verses have been considered. Second, semantic and linguistic analysis requires attention to key terms, syntactic structures, semantic fields, and the internal logic of Qur'anic discourse rather than reliance on translation alone. Third, contextual mediation requires engagement with *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *munāsabah*, historical setting, social context, and the conditions under which a verse is moved into contemporary discussion. Fourth, tafsir comparison requires authors to compare classical, modern, and contemporary interpretations to show the range and transformation of meaning. Fifth, theoretical consistency requires the theory announced in the article to function within the analysis rather than remain decorative. Sixth, argumentative accountability requires conclusions to be traceable to textual evidence and analytical procedure, not simply asserted as normative claims. These components are intended not as a rigid universal template, but as evaluative criteria for assessing whether Qur'anic normativity has been translated into scholarly analysis.

This framework extends Rahman's, Saeed's, and Abu Zayd's contributions by relocating their insights into the concrete practice of contemporary Indonesian academic writing. From Rahman, it takes the principle that Qur'anic passages should be read within the broader moral unity of the Qur'an rather than as isolated proof-texts.[61] From Saeed, it adopts the need to distinguish textual meaning, historical contingency, moral hierarchy, and contemporary application.[62] From Abu Zayd, it takes the insight that meaning is mediated through language, discourse, culture, and interpretive history.[63] Yet the article's contribution is not merely to apply these theories. It shows that the methodological problem in Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship must be in the mechanics of article production: how researchers formulate topics, select verses, invoke tafsir, deploy theory, and construct conclusions.

The model also contributes to broader debates on methodological rigor in Qur'anic studies. The field now includes historical-critical methods, thematic exegesis, structuralist readings, comparative hermeneutics, manuscript studies, digital approaches, and scientific-integrative frameworks.[64] Redaction criticism, for example, has been used to analyze variant Qur'anic narratives and to discuss textual rewriting and compositional processes.[65] Structural approaches such as *al-waḥda al-binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān* emphasize reading surahs as cohesive units and integrating Qur'anic and

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[60] Aisa, "Tafsir Modern Di Indonesia Abad Ke-21: Identifikasi Karakteristik Produk Tafsir Pada Tahun 2001–2022."

[61] Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*.

[62] Saeed, *Islamic Thought: An Introduction*.

[63] Abu Zayd, *Rethinking the Qur'an: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics*.

[64] M Azaiez and M Arfa-Mensia, *Qur'anic Studies: Between History, Theology and Exegesis*, *Qur'anic Studies: Between History, Theology and Exegesis*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111051567; Shah and Haleem, *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*.

[65] G Dye, "Concepts and Methods in the Study of the Qur'ān," *Religions* 12, no. 8 (2021), https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12080599.

Prophetic traditions for deeper hermeneutical insight.[66] Comparative hermeneutical studies have examined how modernist scholars such as Ibn 'Āshūr engaged Biblical materials to validate Qur'anic narratives while challenging Biblical inconsistencies.[67] These approaches differ in assumptions and scope, but they share a demand for explicit procedure. The present study contributes to this wider methodological conversation by arguing that Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship requires not methodological uniformity, but procedural clarity.

This argument also intersects with debates over epistemological standards. The absence of clear epistemological controls in Qur'anic interpretation has been linked to methodological inconsistency, while frameworks such as *qawāʿid al-tafsīr* seek to provide structured principles for reliable interpretation, exegetical competence, ethical integrity, and contextual awareness.[68] The findings of this study support the need for such standards, but they also suggest that rules of interpretation must be operationalized at the level of research practice. A journal article may affirm the importance of tafsir principles while still failing to show how those principles shaped its data selection, textual analysis, and conclusion. Methodological rigor therefore requires more than invoking tradition; it requires making tradition analytically visible.

The framework further complicates the assumption that critical analysis necessarily follows one epistemological model. Qur'anic interpretation has historically included literal, legal, ethical, philosophical, mystical, and esoteric approaches. Ismaili hermeneutics, for instance, privileges *bāṭin* meanings over purely linguistic evidence, while *maqāṣid*-based frameworks seek to preserve essential Islamic objectives while responding to contemporary challenges.[69] Scientific-integrative models such as the Holistic Scientific Exegesis Framework attempt to balance revelation, reason, and empirical observation.[70] These models demonstrate that critical-analytical scholarship need not be identical with secular historical criticism or modern Western hermeneutics. The more fundamental requirement is that each interpretive model state its epistemological assumptions, analytical procedures, and criteria of validity. In this regard, the article offers a flexible but demanding standard: plurality of method is acceptable, but opacity of method is not.

The findings also have implications for discussions of Qur'anic normativity. Studies of Qur'anic ethics show that the Qur'an's normative guidance extends to tolerance, peaceful coexistence, rejection of hate speech, behavioral discipline, and legal-ethical responsibility.[71] Other studies highlight the Qur'an's dialogic structure, linguistic mastery, and theological self-sufficiency as central to its

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[66] Z Alwani, "With 'A'Isha in Mind: Reading Surat Al-Nur through the Qur'an's Structural Unity," in *Muslim Women and Gender Justice: Concepts, Sources, and Histories*, 2019, 123–39, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351025348-8.

[67] H Hurnawijaya et al., "Islamic Preaching on Social Media and Its Impact on Religious Attitudes: A Bibliometric and Systematic Review of Global Research," *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 7, no. 1 (2026), https://doi.org/10.58256/vwk8e276.

[68] Rokhim, Fuad, and Sahin, "Qawāʿid Al Tafsīr As An Epistemological Model For Valid Qur'anic Interpretation: A Comparative Analysis Of Marāh Labīd And Al-Miṣbāḥ."

[69] R İ Mahmut, "The Origin of Esotericism: An Analysis of the Ismaili Esoteric Approach to Qur'anic Interpretation," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 25, no. 1 (2024): 105–20, https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i1.5392; H A Said et al., "Maqashid Based Quránic Interpretation: An Inclusive Approach for the Millenial Generation," *Samarah* 9, no. 2 (2025): 758–77, https://doi.org/10.22373/pdjqc552.

[70] Azlan, Mohd Yusoff, and Ariffin, "Towards A Holistic Framework For Scientific Exegesis: A Comparative Methodological Study Of Elmalili M. Hamdi Yazir And Tantawi Jawhari."

[71] Y A T Alybroudi and M T I Nassar, "Anti-Hate Speech in the Holy Qur'an and Legal Legislation: An Objective Comparative Study," *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences* 52, no. 5 (2025), https://doi.org/10.35516/Hum.2025.10275; A A Almutairi, Z M Yusoff, and A A G Saged, "Tools and Standards of Assessing the Behavioral Disorders and Criminal Tendencies in the Noble Quran," *Quranica* 15, no. 1 Special issue 10 (2023): 87–115, https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85218726058&partnerID=40&md5=bd7f2f91da83052b0d6762029137ff0b.

normative significance.[72] The present article does not contest the normative force of the Qur'an; rather, it argues that normative force becomes academically persuasive only when mediated through interpretation. In scholarly writing, normativity cannot replace analysis. It must be shown through textual reasoning, contextual explanation, comparison of interpretive traditions, and accountable argumentation.

This synthesis is also relevant to emerging technological approaches to Qur'anic exegesis. Recent discussions of artificial intelligence in Qur'anic interpretation highlight both opportunities and ethical risks, especially the need for human oversight to preserve interpretive integrity.[73] AI may assist in identifying lexical patterns, retrieving tafsir materials, mapping thematic clusters, or checking citation consistency. Yet the findings of this study suggest that technology cannot resolve the central problem by itself. The decisive issue remains hermeneutical: how evidence is interpreted, how meaning is justified, and how normative claims are translated into scholarly conclusions. Digital tools may improve efficiency, but they do not substitute for theoretical consistency and argumentative accountability.

The broader relevance of this study therefore extends beyond the Indonesian case. Many fields of Islamic textual studies face a comparable problem: sacred texts are cited as normative authorities, but the movement from text to conclusion is not always analytically traceable. This issue appears in Qur'anic studies, Hadith studies, legal studies, Islamic ethics, interreligious studies, and digital religious discourse. By distinguishing normative citation, interpretive analysis, and critical-analytical scholarship, the article offers a conceptual vocabulary that can be applied to other contexts were religious texts function simultaneously as sources of authority and objects of academic inquiry. Its contribution is not to impose one method on the field, but to clarify what methodological accountability requires when normative texts are used in scholarly argument.

In practical terms, the findings suggest several implications for authors, reviewers, and journals in Qur'anic studies. Authors should distinguish whether a Qur'anic verse is functioning as proof, data, ethical principle, interpretive object, or analytical problem. Reviewers should evaluate whether the article explains verse selection, tafsir sources, analytical procedure, theoretical use, and the basis of conclusion. Journals can strengthen article templates by requiring authors to specify their interpretive method operationally rather than merely naming it. These measures would not restrict intellectual creativity; they would make scholarly claims more transparent, contestable, and internationally legible.

This sub-section therefore synthesizes the study's central contribution: Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship can preserve Qur'anic normativity while strengthening critical analysis if it treats normativity as something to be interpreted, mediated, and argued rather than merely cited. The originality of this article lies in shifting the debate from the abstract opposition between normative and critical approaches to the concrete question of methodological accountability. This shift prepares the ground for the conclusion: the future of critical Qur'anic scholarship depends not on weakening the authority of the Qur'an, but on making the scholarly use of that authority analytically traceable, theoretically coherent, and methodologically defensible.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined methodological problems in contemporary Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship by focusing on how Qur'anic verses, tafsir references, theoretical frameworks, and

[72] A Abalkheel, M Sourani, and S El Zohbi, "Structural Independence and Dialogic Coherence in Qur'anic Texts: A Syntactic Analytical Study," *Forum for Linguistic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2025): 487–500, https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i2.8333.

[73] A Umar et al., "Artificial Intelligence and the Ethics of Tafsir: Integrating Digital Technologies and Islamic Humanities in Automating Interpretative Processes," *Journal of Educational Technology and Learning Creativity* 3, no. 2 (2025): 324–47, https://doi.org/10.37251/jetlc.v3i2.2496; M H M Azhar et al., "Ethics and Limits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Quranic Exegesis According to the Epistemological Framework of Islamic Knowledge," *Quranica* 17, no. 2 (2025): 97–124, https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-105018233406&partnerID=40&md5=2b4db6dfe95e93ec70f563c9c3f2d622.

methodological claims are used in selected academic articles. The study shows that the central problem is not the presence of normativity in Qur'anic studies, but the insufficient methodological mediation between Qur'anic citation and scholarly conclusion. In many cases, verses are used to legitimize contemporary social, ethical, political, ecological, familial, or digital issues, yet the analytical process through which textual meaning is established, contextualized, and transformed into academic argument remains underdeveloped.

The first major finding is that Qur'anic verses often function as normative legitimation for contemporary social concerns. This pattern confirms the vitality of Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship in responding to modern realities, but it also reveals the risk of reducing Qur'anic interpretation to proof-texting when verses are not examined through linguistic, historical, intertextual, and tafsir-based analysis. The second finding concerns methodological ambiguity. Many studies name methods such as thematic tafsir, contextual interpretation, hermeneutics, comparative analysis, or living Qur'an, but do not always operationalize them clearly in relation to source selection, verse analysis, tafsir comparison, theoretical use, and conclusion-building. The third finding shows that Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship is shaped by a productive but unresolved tension between textual fidelity and contextual relevance. Contextualization becomes academically persuasive only when the movement from Qur'anic wording to contemporary meaning is explicit, traceable, and theoretically accountable.

The theoretical contribution of this article lies in its distinction between normative citation**,** interpretive analysis**,** and critical-analytical Qur'anic scholarship. This distinction shifts the debate away from a simple opposition between normative and critical approaches. It argues instead that Qur'anic normativity can remain central to Islamic scholarship while being subjected to disciplined analytical procedures. The proposed critical-analytical framework emphasizes textual selection transparency, semantic and linguistic analysis, contextual mediation, tafsir comparison, theoretical consistency, and argumentative accountability.

Academically, this study contributes to Qur'anic studies, Islamic hermeneutics, and interdisciplinary Islamic textual studies by offering a methodological vocabulary for evaluating how sacred texts are transformed into scholarly arguments. Its broader implication is that Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship can strengthen its international visibility not by abandoning its normative commitments, but by making its interpretive procedures more explicit, rigorous, and contestable. Future research may expand this study through a larger corpus, comparative analysis across different Muslim-majority contexts, bibliometric mapping of Qur'anic studies publications, interviews with authors and journal editors, or digital analysis of citation patterns in Qur'anic scholarship. Such studies would further clarify how methodological rigor can be strengthened in the academic study of the Qur'an.

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