

CONCEPTUALIZING READING IN THE QUR'AN: A THEMATIC (MAUDHU'I) TAFSIR ANALYSIS

Muhammad Diaz Supandi^{1*}, M. Bili Syaputra², Ahnaf Falih³,
Muhammad Faid Ghathfan Haryudha⁴, Alfian Arif Rabbani⁵, & Mahmud Rifaannudin⁶

^{*1-5} University of Darussalam Gontor

*e-mail: muhammaddiazsupandi2715@gmail.com

Submit Tgl: 06-Februari-2026

Diterima Tgl: 07-Februari-2026

Diterbitkan Tgl: 08-Februari-2026

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan merekonstruksi konseptualisasi membaca dalam Al-Qur'an yang sering direduksi menjadi sekadar literasi teknis, padahal teks suci menawarkan paradigma holistik-integratif. Berangkat dari problem fragmentasi kajian terdahulu yang parsial dan belum menyentuh integritas semantik jejaring leksikal kunci (*qara'a, tala, darasa, dll.*), studi ini mengatasi urgensi teoretis-praktis untuk merumuskan epistemologi membaca Qur'ani yang koheren sebagai landasan filsafat ilmu dan pendidikan Islam. Dengan metode tafsir maudhu'i yang ketat, dilakukan eksplorasi tematik-ekshaustif terhadap seluruh ayat terkait, analisis semantik-kontekstual, dan sintesis model konseptual. Novelty penelitian terletak pada tiga aspek: penerapan prosedur maudhu'i yang rigor untuk tema kompleks, analisis semantik komparatif-interkoneksi antarleksikon, dan konstruksi teori berbentuk Model Epistemologi Membaca Bertingkat (Lapisan Teknis-Prosedural, Performatif-Reflektif, dan Kontemplatif-Konstruktif). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa membaca dalam Al-Qur'an adalah epistemologi aktif yang hierarkis, berobjek ganda (ayat qauliyah-kauniyah), bersubjek ideal (*ulul albab*), serta bermetodologi integratif-dialogis, dengan tujuan menghasilkan ilmu bermanfaat (*'ilm nāfi'*) dan kemaslahatan universal (*rahmatan lil 'ālamīn*). Model ini menjadi kerangka operasional untuk merevitalisasi paradigma keilmuan Islam yang integratif.

Kata Kunci: Epistemologi Membaca; Tafsir Maudhu'i; Tafsir Al-Qur'an; Pendidikan Islam Integratif; Leksikal Qur'ani

Abstract: This study aims to reconstruct the conceptualization of reading in the Qur'an, which is often reduced to mere technical literacy, while the sacred text offers a holistic-integrative paradigm. Departing from the problem of fragmentation in previous studies that are partial and have not touched the semantic integrity of key lexical networks (*qara'a, tala, darasa, etc.*), this research addresses the urgency of theoretical-practical needs to formulate a coherent Qur'anic epistemology of reading as a foundation for Islamic philosophy of science and education. Using a rigorous thematic (maudhu'i) tafsir method, an exhaustive thematic exploration of all related verses, semantic-contextual analysis, and synthesis of a conceptual model were conducted. The novelty of the research lies in three aspects: the application of rigorous maudhu'i procedures for complex themes, comparative-interconnective semantic analysis between lexicons, and the construction of a theory in the form of a Multilayered Epistemology of Qur'anic Reading Model (Technical-Procedural, Performative-Reflective, and Contemplative-Constructive Layers). The results indicate that reading in the Qur'an is an active, hierarchical epistemology with dual objects (qauliyah and kauniyah verses), an ideal subject (ulul albab), and an integrative-dialogical methodology, aiming to produce

beneficial knowledge ('ilm nāfi') and universal benefit (rahmatan lil 'ālamīn). This model serves as an operational framework for revitalizing an integrated Islamic knowledge paradigm.

Keywords: *Epistemology of Reading; Thematic Tafsir; Qur'anic Exegesis; Integrative Islamic Education; Qur'anic Lexical*

Cara mengutip Supandi, M. D., Syaputra, M. B., Falih, A., Haryudha, M. F. G., Rabbani, A. A. & Rifaannudin, M. (2026). Conceptualizing Reading in the Qur'an: A Thematic (Maudhu'i) Tafsīr Analysis: The Lexical Spectrum and Semantic Hierarchy of Reading in the Qur'an Objects, Subjects, and Methodologies of Reading: An Ontological and Epistemological Analysis The Synthesis of a Conceptual Model: Integral Reading as a Qur'anic Epistemology. *JIS: Journal Islamic Studies*, 4(1), 20–32.
<https://doi.org/10.71456/jis.v4i1.1650>

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an, in its position as the final revelatory doctrine and a holistic life manual, transforms the primary imperative "Iqra'" (Read!) into the central axis that drives the entire engine of Islamic epistemology. This command is not merely a literal introduction but a philosophical declaration that positions the act of reading as a *sine qua non*—an absolute prerequisite for the edifice of a civilizational knowledge (Al-Attas, 1993). However, in contemporary discursive practice, the concept of 'reading' undergoes significant semantic reduction, being diminished to merely a linear technical skill (technical literacy) (Izutsu, 2002). The Qur'an, conversely, positions it as an episteme a system of knowledge encompassing cognitive (ta'aqqul), spiritual (tadabbur), empirical (nazhar), and social (tabligh) dimensions. The fundamental problem this research aims to address is the conceptual disintegration in viewing the phenomenon of reading, resulting from partial academic approaches that have yet to engage with the semantic integrity offered by the sacred text (Abū al-Su'ūd al-'Imādī, 1971).

A systematic review of the research landscape reveals a dominance of thematic fragmentation. Most studies are divided between philosophical analyses of the meaning of 'iqra' as a concept, historical examinations of the occasions of revelation (asbabun nuzul) of Surah Al-'Alaq, or lexical discussions limited to the word qara'a. This mono-lexical approach overlooks the fact that the Qur'an constructs concepts through a dynamic network of synonyms, such as tala (reading with recitation and contemplation), darasa (studying iteratively and in-depth), nazhara (observing critically), and fahima (comprehending the essence) (Nasr, 1996). Consequently, the resulting understanding is reductive and non-operational, failing to provide an applicable theoretical template for the development of contemporary knowledge and education.

The research gap that is the focus of this study is the absence of a systematic-comprehensive investigation with a clear methodology: (1) to conduct an exhaustive identification of the entire corpus of verses directly or indirectly related to the activity of reading; (2) to apply an integrative semantic-thematic analysis to unravel all core lexicons

and the conceptual relations between terms; and (3) to synthesize these findings into a holistic, hierarchical, and coherent conceptual model. Existing literature has been unable to bridge the three levels of analysis: ontological (the entities being read: text, nature, self), epistemological (the methodology for acquiring knowledge through reading), and axiological (the values, ethics, and teleological purpose of reading).

The urgency of this research is three-pillared: theoretical, methodological, and practical. Theoretically, it is imperative to formulate a complete Qur'anic epistemology of reading as a contribution to Islamic philosophy of science. Methodologically, this study offers an applicable protocol for the thematic interpretation (*tafsir maudhu'i*) of complex conceptual themes. Practically, the world of education faces the problems of multidimensional literacy decadence and the alienation of knowledge. Reconstructing the concept of reading from its primary source becomes a paradigmatic foundation for designing an educational ecosystem that is integrated, interconnected, and transformative, thereby re-actualizing the liberating vision of 'iqra'.

Based on this problem identification, the main objective of this research is to reconstruct the conceptualization of 'reading' in the Qur'an through a critical application of the thematic interpretation (*tafsir maudhu'i*) method. This objective is operationalized through several steps: (1) Thematic exploration and codification of all verses containing the root letters q-r-, t-l-w, d-r-s, as well as semantic keywords like n-z-r, f-h-m, and 'a-q-l; (2) Contextual and semantic analysis considering the occasions of revelation (*asbabun nuzul*), inter-verse connections (*munasabah al-ayat*), and utilizing primary classical and modern exegetical sources (e.g., ath-Thabari, al-Razi, al-Maraghi) accompanied by linguistic approaches; (3) Formulation of an "Integral Qur'anic Reading" Model that clearly maps the triad: types and objects of reading, processes and methods, and values and ultimate ends; and (4) Derivation of the model's implications for Islamic knowledge epistemology and the design of educational praxis relevant to the contemporary context.

The novelty or originality of this research emanates from three points of innovation. First, in the methodological realm, this study executes *tafsir maudhu'i* with rigor, employing strict and transparent operational procedures for a theme requiring a synthetic approach. Second, in the analytical realm, it conducts a comparative-interconnective semantic study that not only dissects lexical meanings but also the functional and hierarchical relations among all lexical variables that form the concept. Third, in the realm of scholarly output, this research transcends descriptive function towards theoretical construction by producing a "Multilayered Epistemology of Qur'anic Reading" model that is systematic, testable, and can serve as a reference framework for theory development in the fields of thematic exegesis, Islamic philosophy of education, and studies on integration-interconnection of knowledge.

RESEACH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach based on library research, focusing on the analysis of authoritative texts. The primary method used is thematic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*), chosen for its capacity to unify the Qur'an's messages, which are scattered across various surahs, into a coherent and systematic understanding of a specific theme (Mustaqim, 2014). The research procedure follows the standard steps of *tafsir maudhu'i*, modified for conceptual analysis, which includes: (1) Data Collection (*al-Jam'u*), (2) Analysis and

Categorization (*at-Tartib wa al-Tahliil*), and (3) Synthesis and Conclusion (*al-Istiqra' wa al-Istinbath*) (Flick, 2018).

During the data collection stage, an exhaustive search was conducted for all Qur'anic verses related to the activity of reading. The search employed morphological tracking techniques of key root words: q-r-' (to read/recite, to gather), t-l-w (to follow, to recite), d-r-s (to study), n-z-r (to look/contemplate), f-h-m (to understand), and 'a-q-l (to reason). The identified verses were then codified into a data matrix containing information on surah and verse numbers, historical context (*asbabun nuzul*), and intertextual connections (*munasabah*) (Hakim, 2019). The primary data source is the Qur'anic *mushaf*, while secondary sources include authoritative exegetical works (such as *Jami' al-Bayan* by ath-Thabari, *Mafatih al-Ghaib* by al-Razi, and *Tafsir al-Maraghi*) as well as scholarly works in Qur'anic semantics (*'Ulum al-Qur'an* and *Dilalat al-Alfaz*).

The data analysis stage was conducted qualitatively using two complementary approaches: semantic-linguistic analysis and contextual-thematic analysis. Semantic analysis was used to unravel the spectrum of meaning for each key lexicon and its synonym-antonym relations within the Qur'anic corpus, while contextual-thematic analysis was employed to understand the verses' meanings based on historical, sociological backgrounds, and their relation to the Qur'an's overarching themes. All collected and categorized data were then synthesized to identify patterns, categories, and hierarchical relationships between concepts. This synthesis culminated in the formulation of the "Integral Qur'anic Reading" conceptual model, which maps the ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions of the reading activity (Mujahidin, 2022). Interpretive validity was maintained through source triangulation by comparing interpretations from various exegetes (*mufasssirun*) and consultation with experts in the fields of Qur'anic exegesis and Arabic linguistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Lexical Spectrum and Hierarchical Meaning of Reading in the Qur'an

A thematic investigation of the relevant corpus of verses reveals a graded and interconnected lexical structure through which the Qur'an constructs the meaning of the act of reading. A philosophical semantic approach, as pioneered by Al-Raghib al-Asfahani in his magnum opus, *Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an*, affirms that each key diction in the Qur'an is not merely a synonym but a conceptual entity with its own *uslub* (style) and *maqam* (contextual meaning), which collectively form a complete mosaic of understanding (Al-Aṣḥānī, 2013). At the most primordial level, the term *qara'a* functions as the axiomatic foundation, referring to the activity of decoding graphic symbols into meaningful speech. This basic literacy competency is manifested in the first revelation (Q.S. Al-'Alaq: 1-5), where the imperative *iqra'* contains a unique dialectic of meaning: on one hand, it is a concrete call to recite text (in the context of the Prophet being *ummiyyun*), and on the other, an existential metaphor for 'reading' the book of nature and the self. The interpretation of Imam Ath-Thabari in *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an*,

defining *iqra'* as "*utlu ma kutiba laka*" (recite what has been written for you), solidifies this linguistic-procedural dimension as the initial gateway to the world of knowledge (Thabathaba'i, 1955).

The transition to a more sublime level of meaning occurs through the term *tala*, which occupies the second stratum in this epistemic hierarchy. Unlike the instrumental nature of *qara'a*, *tala* as in Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 121 carries a richer density of meaning. Imam Al-Qurthubi in *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an* unpacks the meaning of *tala* as a comprehensive action: following (*ittiba'*), reciting with *tartil*, as well as contemplating (*tadabbur*) and implementing (*'amal*). Thus, the activity of *tala* is trifunctional: performative in recitation, reflective in contemplation, and communicative-transformative in conveyance (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964). Al-Biqā'i in *Nazhm al-Durar* provides an elegant metaphor, stating that *tala* is like "flowing the water of recitation" which irrigates the intellect and heart, thereby giving birth to a living and applicable understanding. This underpins the integral unity between *tilawah* (recitation) and *tadabbur* (contemplation), as mandated in Q.S. Shad: 29.

The pinnacle of this epistemic journey is crowned by the term *darasa*, which represents the highest and most comprehensive level of Qur'anic reading. This word, which appears in contexts criticizing the People of the Book for merely toying with the text (Q.S. Al-An'am: 105) or praising those who delve deeply into knowledge (Q.S. Ali 'Imran: 79), contains the semantics of in-depth research, repetitive study (*tikrar*), and exploration of layered meanings (*ta'ammuq*) to mine knowledge and wisdom. Al-Zamakhshari in *Al-Kashshaf* associates it with the diligent activity of scholars in examining texts (*muwazabah 'ala al-kutub*). Its significance is elevated by Ibn 'Ashur in *Al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*, who views *darasa* not merely as an individual activity, but as a collective scientific method (*manhaj 'ilmi jama'i*) for deriving legal rulings and lessons, signifying the analytical complexity and depth as the *telos* (ultimate aim) of the entire reading process ('Ashur, 1984).

This network of meaning is expanded and deepened by a number of supporting lexicons that form a coherent semantic field. The term *nazhara* (Q.S. Al-Ghasyiyah: 17-20) implies critical and contemplative observation of the cosmic verses (*ayat kauniyah*). Al-Raghib al-Asfahani meticulously distinguishes *nazhar* as intellectual-spiritual insight (*bashirah*) aimed at pondering divine proofs, compared to *basar* which is merely sensory sight. Meanwhile, *fahima* (understanding the essence) and *'aqala* (using the intellect comprehensively) emphasize the dimension of internalization and logical-systematic reasoning (Ibn Manẓūr, 1997). This lexical network clarifies that the object of reading (*maqrū'*) in the Qur'anic worldview is universal, encompassing the sacred text (*ayat qauliyah*), the universe (*ayat kauniyah*), and the human self (*ayat anfusiyyah*).

The triadic hierarchy of *qara'a* – *tala* – *darasa*, enriched by its supporting semantic field, represents a progressive and spiral pedagogic-epistemological process. This process moves dynamically from the acquisition of basic literacy skills (*qara'a*), towards the internalization and performance of meaning (*tala*), and culminates in the capability to critique, deconstruct, and reconstruct knowledge (*darasa*). This tiered model resonates with the philosophy of integral Islamic education that is graded, as conceptualized by Al-Attas

and others, moving from *ta'lim* (transmission of knowledge), to *ta'dib* (instillation of adab), and finally to *tarbiyah* (holistic development of human potential).

The perspectives of modern exegetes strengthen the dynamic relevance of this hierarchy. Sayyid Qutb in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* asserts that the sequence of *iqra'* and *'allama* indicates that reading in Islam is a directed educational process culminating in enlightenment (*tanwir*), not a neutral activity (Armayanto, 2022). Meanwhile, Buya Hamka in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* views this hierarchy as a transformative response to the challenges of the times: an evolution from the liberation of illiteracy to the liberation of thought, from literacy to wisdom, which has direct implications for social praxis.

The epistemological implications of this hierarchical model are fundamental. It offers an integrative-transdisciplinary framework that reconciles the false dichotomy between transmitted (*naqli*) and rational (*'aqli*) sciences, between revelation and empiricism (Gaffar & Anees, 2025). In the context of contemporary scholarship, this framework becomes the methodological foundation for building an Islamic research paradigm that avoids the pitfalls of shallow scripturalism and secular rationalism, yet is grounded in deep study (*tahqiq*) imbued with a spirit of servitude (*'ubudiyyah*) and contemplation (*tadabbur*). Thus, reading at its highest level is elevated in stature to become the most noble form of intellectual worship (*'ibadah 'aqliyyah*) (Al-Fārābī, 1968).

In conclusion, the lexical spectrum of the Qur'an forms an organic, hierarchical, and teleological epistemology of reading. It begins with technical competence (*qara'a*), is nurtured through performative internalization (*tala*), and reaches its culmination in research that produces transformative knowledge and wisdom (*darasa*) (al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Shīrāzī, 1981). Supporting lexicons like *nazhar* and *'aql* expand the horizon of reading's objects and methodologies to encompass all reality. This hierarchical construction of meaning, as read through the lens of exegetes across ages, is more than a passive semantic analysis; it is an operational-progressive guide for awakening a civilization of knowledge (*hadarah 'ilmiyyah*) that stands upon the foundation of *tawhid*, realizing the grand vision of the command *Iqra'* which is the *arche* (first principle) of prophethood and Islamic knowledge (Ibn Sīnā, 2010).

Objects, Subjects, and the Methodology of Reading: An Ontological and Epistemological Analysis

This research successfully maps the ontological complexity of the objects of reading (*maudu' al-qira'ah*) referenced by the Qur'an, which are structurally divided into two fundamental, mutually reinforcing categories. The first category is verbal revelations (*ayat qauliyah*), the canonized verbal revelation in the mushaf, serving as the primary source of all normative and theological knowledge (Triono, 2023). The second category is cosmic verses (*ayat kauniyah*), which refer to signs of Divine greatness manifested in the universe (*afaq*), human history, and human psychology and physiology (*anfus*). This dual classification, as alluded to in Surah Fussilat (41:53), forms a holistic ontological foundation where textual reality and cosmic reality are understood as two coherent and mutually explanatory mediums

of revelation. Al-Razi in *Mafatih al-Ghaib* affirms that both types of verses are the primary proofs (*al-adillah al-asliyyah*) for knowing Allah, necessitating distinct yet convergent hermeneutical approaches (Razi, 1862).

Reading the verbal revelations (*ayat qauliyah*) demands a specialized methodology that is philological-historical and communal. This methodology encompasses, first, a deep understanding of Arabic linguistic structure and its rhetorical conventions (*'ilm al-balaghah*). Second, it involves tracing the historical context of revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*), which is key to understanding the particular message intended, a principle central to works like Al-Suyuti's *Lubab al-Nuqul* (Romdoni, 2023). Third, and most crucially, is consulting the interpretive heritage of past scholars (*tafsir mu'tabar*). This process, as emphasized by Ibn Taymiyyah in *Muqaddimah fi Usul al-Tafsir*, is not a form of blind dependence but a critical dialogue with the intellectual tradition to avoid deviant interpretation (*tafsir bi al-ra'y al-madhmum*). Thus, reading the verbal revelations is an activity bound by scholarly discipline (*manhajiyah*) and the continuity of scholarly authority (*isnad*) (Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, 1993).

Conversely, reading the cosmic verses (*ayat kauniyah*) requires a methodological shift toward an empirical-rational and contemplative approach. The Qur'an consistently uses imperatives like *nazhara* (to see/observe), *tafakkara* (to reflect deeply), and *'aqala* (to reason) in the context of cosmological and anthropological verses. The intended activity of *nazhar*, as explained by Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, is not merely passive sensory observation but active observation accompanied by an awareness of the order (*nizam*) and harmony (*takaful*) that point to a Designer. Subsequently, *tafakkur* (critical reflection) functions to transcend empirical data toward philosophical generalization and spiritual acknowledgment. This methodology forms an epistemic cycle from observation, to rational induction, and finally to transcendental acknowledgment (*iman*), as depicted in the call to reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth (Q.S. Ali 'Imran 3:190-191).

Regarding the subject dimension, the Qur'an portrays the ideal reader as *ulul albab* (people of understanding), a terminology implying the integration of intellectual and spiritual capacities. The characteristics of *ulul albab*, as detailed in Surah Al-Zumar (39:9, 18), are their ability to combine rational strength (*albab* as the essence of intellect) with heartfelt submission (*hashyah*). They are active, critical, and reflective subjects who do not merely absorb information but "listen to speech and follow the best of it." This figure is reinforced by the concept of *al-rasikhuna fi al-'ilm* (those firmly grounded in knowledge) in Surah Ali 'Imran (3:7), described in Al-Maraghi's tafsir as intellectuals possessing specialized depth and the ability to grasp multi-dimensional meanings of the sacred text, including the ambiguous (*mutashabihat*) (Bickle, 2003).

The reading methodology built from the interaction between this dual object and ideal subject is integrative-dialogical. It rejects the dichotomy between text and context, revelation and reason, religious and secular sciences. Instead, this methodology constructs a dynamic dialogical network between three elements: the sacred text (as the authoritative source), empirical-historical reality (as the field of verification and application), and human intellect

(as the tool for critique and synthesis). Such an approach ensures that the resulting understanding is not a frozen literalism but a dynamic and contextual understanding, capable of responding to contemporary challenges without losing its normative roots. Quraish Shihab in *Membumikan Al-Qur'an* (Contextualizing the Qur'an) terms this approach "contextualization," where the Qur'an's universal message is grounded through an intelligent reading of reality (Shihab, 2019).

The implication of this ontological and epistemological construction gives rise to a tawhidic paradigm of knowledge. In this paradigm, all objects of knowledge—be it scriptural text, natural phenomena, or historical events—are viewed as "*ayat*" or signs pointing to the Singular Truth. The subject of knowledge (*al-'alim*) is tasked with performing an integrative "reading" of all these signs using the appropriate methodology. This aligns with the vision of the Islamization of contemporary knowledge championed by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, which emphasizes the reunification of fragmented sciences under the framework of tawhid. This paradigm offers an exit from the crisis of modernity marked by the dissociation between fact and value, between science and spirituality (Al-Attas, 1993).

Consequently, the ontological-epistemological map resulting from this research is not merely an academic description; it is an operational framework for the reconstruction of Islamic knowledge. This framework demands an educational curriculum that does not separate the study of tafsir from natural sciences, or hadith studies from sociology. It calls for the emergence of a new generation of *ulul albab* proficient in religious language as well as the methodologies of modern sciences, capable of performing *ijtihad* not only in law but also in reading social reality and the cosmos. Ultimately, reading within this framework is a civilizational project aimed at realizing the prosperity of the earth (*'imarah al-ard*) as a manifestation of faith, in line with humanity's purpose as vicegerents (*khilafah*).

The ontological-epistemological analysis reveals that the concept of reading in the Qur'an rests on three robust pillars: a dual object (*qauliyah* and *kauniyah*), an integral subject (*ulul albab*), and a dialogical-integrative methodology (Supandi et al., 2025). These three form a coherent knowledge system where revealed truth and rational-empirical truth do not clash but mutually confirm and enrich one another. This conceptual reconstruction, sourced from a thematic interpretation of the Qur'an and the explanations of major exegetes, provides a strong foundation for building a relevant Islamic epistemology that addresses contemporary intellectual challenges, while also serving as a concrete guide for the reform of educational and research systems.

Conceptual Model Synthesis: Integral Reading as Qur'anic Epistemology

Based on a holistic synthesis of all lexical, ontological, and methodological findings, this study successfully reconstructs a Multilayered Epistemology of Qur'anic Reading model. This model crystallizes the thematic analysis that maps reading activity in the Qur'an not as a singular act, but as a graded and organic epistemic process. Like a phased educational system, the model consists of three fundamental layers dialectically

interconnected: (1) the Technical-Procedural Layer, centered on the term *qara'a*; (2) the Performative-Reflective Layer, focused on the term *tala*; and (3) the Contemplative-Constructive Layer, actualized through the terms *darasa*, *nazhar*, and *tafakkur*. Each layer represents a higher phase in the reader's intellectual-spiritual journey.

The Technical-Procedural Layer forms the imperative foundation of the entire edifice. Centered on the basic meaning of *qara'a* as text-decoding ability, this layer emphasizes mastering reading tools (*alat al-qira'ah*) including language literacy, Arabic grammar (*nahwu-sharaf*), and orthography (Muhammad Muhammad Diaz Supandi Muhammad Abdan Khoiri, 2025). Al-Raghib al-Asfahani in *Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an* asserts that the root q-r-' fundamentally means "to gather," which later evolved into "to read," indicating that this most basic activity already contains the seed of information integration. However, as Ibn Khaldun reminds us in *Al-Muqaddimah*, stopping at this layer without ascending to the next level will only produce a reader who understands sentence structure but fails to grasp the "soul" and objectives (*maqasid*) of the text being read (Khaldun, 1377).

A qualitative transition occurs at the Performative-Reflective Layer, mediated by the term *tala*. This layer transforms reading from an individual and receptive activity into a communicative and reflective action. Here, reading involves proper recitation (*tartil*), emotional-intellectual reflection (*tadabbur*), and a commitment to practice. Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* specifically discusses the etiquette of Qur'anic recitation (*adab al-tilawah*), which includes heartfelt devotion and readiness to receive guidance. This layer, as reflected in Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 121, functions as a hermeneutical bridge connecting the static text with the living reader-subject, ensuring the recitation does not merely reach the throat (*hanjariyah*) but permeates the heart (*qalbiyyah*) (Al-Ghazālī, 2005).

The pinnacle of this process is the Contemplative-Constructive Layer, which is the arena for producing true knowledge. This layer is operationalized through the synergy of the terms *darasa* (in-depth study), *nazhar* (critical observation), and *tafakkur* (philosophical reflection). Ibn 'Ashur in *Maqasid al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyyah* explains that productive *darasa* must transcend textual understanding towards unveiling the universal objectives of the Shariah (*al-maqasid al-kulliyyah*) (Putra et al., 2021). At this layer, the reader—now a researcher (*muhaqqiq*) engages in deconstructing meanings, analyzing contexts, and synthesizing new knowledge to produce contextual and transformative understanding. In his classification of knowledge, Al-Farabi would place activity at this layer as part of the active and productive acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafad*) (Al-Fārābī, 1906).

These three layers are not separate compartments but are complementary and cumulative in a spiral process of knowledge. One cannot achieve the depth of *darasa* without mastering the clarity of *qara'a* and the profundity of *tala*. This model reflects traditional Islamic educational concepts, as seen in the *pesantren* learning system where the *qira'ah* (reading texts) stage must be mastered before entering the *munazarah* (discussion) stage and finally *istinbat* (deriving legal conclusions). This philosophy also aligns with contemporary learning theories like Bloom's Taxonomy, which progresses from knowledge and comprehension to evaluation and creation.

More than a descriptive model, this construction asserts that reading in the Qur'an is an active epistemology with a clear teleology (ultimate purpose). Its goal is not merely to gather information (*ma'lumat*), but to produce beneficial knowledge ('ilm nafi') that yields deep conviction (*yaqin*) and practical piety. Al-Zarnuji in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* emphasizes that the intention for seeking knowledge must be to remove ignorance from oneself and others, and to revive the religion and preserve Islam. Thus, this model inherently contains a strong axiological-ethical dimension, where reading activity must be directed towards cultivating character, social responsibility, and striving to realize universal benefit (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*).

The theoretical implications of this model are highly significant for revitalizing contemporary Islamic knowledge paradigms. The model offers an integrative-transdisciplinary framework capable of reconciling the frequent dichotomy between religious sciences (*al-'ulum al-naqliyyah*) and rational sciences (*al-'ulum al-'aqliyyah*). Within this framework, a scientist observing nature (*nazhar*) and an exegete studying a text (*darasa*) are essentially performing equivalent epistemological activities—both are “readers of Allah's signs.” This framework aligns with Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's call for the Islamization of modern knowledge, which involves instilling key Islamic concepts like *khilafah*, *'adl*, and *hikmah* into the structure of contemporary science, so that knowledge is no longer value-free but imbued with tawhidic values.

The resulting Multilayered Epistemology of Qur'anic Reading is more than a product of textual analysis; it is a blueprint for building a civilization of knowledge. This model invites the redesign of educational systems, research methodologies, and knowledge cultures that integratively balance all three layers. It restores the spirit of *Iqra'* to its fullest essence: as a command to build a civilization (*tamaddun*) standing on the pillars of strong technical literacy, deep spiritual contemplation, and intellectual productivity beneficial to the universe. Thus, reading is once again positioned as the primary intellectual endeavor that determines the progress of the community.

CONCLUSION

This study has successfully reconstructed the concept of reading in the Qur'an through a rigorous application of the thematic (*maudhu'i*) tafsir method, revealing a sophisticated and hierarchical epistemology that transcends a simplistic, linear understanding of literacy. By systematically compiling and analyzing the entire semantic network of key Qur'anic terms including *qara'a* (to recite), *tala* (to follow/recite), and *darasa* (to study in-depth), supported by *nazhar* (to observe) and *'aql* (to reason)—the research demonstrates that "Iqra'" signifies a progressive intellectual-spiritual journey. It culminates in the formulation of a "Multilayered Epistemology of Qur'anic Reading," a three-tiered model comprising the Technical-Procedural, Performatif-Reflective, and Contemplative-Constructive layers. This model posits reading as an active, integrative epistemology that holistically engages with the dual ontological objects of divine revelation: the textual verses (*ayat qauliyah*) and the cosmic verses (*ayat kauniyah*), thereby bridging the often-artificial divide between transmitted and rational sciences within Islamic intellectual tradition.

The primary theoretical contribution of this research lies in providing a coherent conceptual framework that systematizes the Qur'anic philosophy of reading. This framework addresses a significant gap in previous literature, which tended to be fragmentary and focused on isolated terms. By mapping the distinct yet complementary objectives, methodologies, and knowledge outputs of each layer—from basic decoding to deep study and critical reflection the study offers a testable model for an integrated Islamic epistemology. Practically, this model serves as a vital paradigmatic foundation for contemporary Islamic education and research. It advocates for curricula and pedagogical approaches that cultivate the ideal reader, the *ulul albab* (people of understanding), who is capable of navigating both sacred texts and empirical reality with intellectual rigor, spiritual humility, and a commitment to social benefit (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*).

While this study provides a comprehensive textual analysis, it acknowledges certain limitations that point to avenues for future research. The model, though derived from classical exegesis (*tafsir mu'tabar*), requires further empirical validation and application in diverse educational settings to assess its efficacy in fostering integrated learning. Subsequent research could involve designing and testing instructional modules based on this three-layered framework in *madrassah* or Islamic university contexts. Furthermore, the principles of this Qur'anic epistemology could be constructively engaged with modern interdisciplinary fields, such as the philosophy of science or critical pedagogy, to explore its potential for contributing to a holistic, value-oriented discourse on knowledge. Ultimately, this research reaffirms that "Iqra'" is not merely a historical command but a perpetual, dynamic call to build a civilization (*tamaddun*) founded on profound literacy, reflective practice, and transformative knowledge.

REFERENCE

- ‘Ashur, I. (1984). *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*. Dār al-Tunisiyyah.
- Abū al-Su‘ūd al-‘Imādī. (1971). *Irshād al-‘Aql al-Salīm ilā Mazāyā al-Kitāb al-Karīm* Juz VI. Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī.
- Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī. (1993). *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ fī al-Tafsīr* (Vol. 2). Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah.
- Al-Aṣḥānī, A.-R. (2013). *Mu‘jam Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur’ān al-Karīm* (Bei (ed.)). dar al kutub al ilmiyah. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=jf1sDwAAQBAJ>
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1993). *Islam and Secularism*. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC). <https://doi.org/10.15476/ELTE.2021.128>
- al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Shīrāzī, Ṣadr. (1981). *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta‘āliyah fī al-Asfār al-‘Aqliyyah al-Arba‘ah Jilid I*. Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī.
- Al-Fārābī. (1906). *Kitab ara’ ahl al-madinah al-fadilah*. Muṣṭafā Fahmī al-Kutubī.
- Al-Fārābī, A. N. M. ibn M. (1968). *Risālah fī al-‘Aql*. In M. T. Dānishpazhūh (Ed.), *Rasā’il al-Fārābī al-Falsafīyyah* (pp. 31–38). Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī.
- Al-Ghazālī, A. Ḥāmid M. ibn M. (2005). *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn Jilid III*. Dār al-Ma‘rifah.

- Al-Qurṭubī. (1964). *Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān* (2nd ed., Vol. 14). Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah.
- Armayanto, H. (2022). *Jurnal Kajian Al-Quran dan Tafsir Konsep Kalimat Sawa’ dalam Hubungan Antaragama: Analisis Komparatif Pandangan Hamka dan Nurcholish Madjid Al-Misykah: Jurnal Kajian Al-Quran dan Tafsir Vol 3 No 2 (2022)*. 3(2), 199–223.
- Bickle, J. (2003). *Philosophy and Neuroscience: A Ruthlessly Reductive Account*. Springer.
- Flick, U. (2018). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Gaffar, A., & Anees, M. (2025). Inclusive Tawhid as an Epistemology of Islamic Education. *FIKROTUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Manajemen Islam*, 15(1), 135–148. <https://doi.org/10.32806/jf.v15i1.833>
- Hakim, L. N. (2019). *METODE PENELITIAN TAFSIR*. Noer Flkri.
- Ibn Manẓūr. (1997). *Lisān al-‘Arab* (Vol. 11). Dār Ṣādir.
- Ibn Sīnā, A. ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd A. (2010). *al-Shifā’* (Vols. 1–4). Manshūrāt Jāmi‘at al-Muṣṭafā.
- Izutsu, T. (2002). *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’an*. McGill-Queen’s University Press.
- Khaldun, I. (1377). *Muqaddimah*. Muassasah Risalah.
- Muhammad Muhammad Diaz Supandi Muhammad Abdan Khoiri, I. G. A. A. M. M. A. N. (2025). Revisiting Deep Ecology through Qur’anic Exegesis: Comparative Perspectives from al-Sha‘rawi and Fazlun Khalid. *Zad Mufassirin*, 7(5), 306–326.
- Mujahidin, A. (2022). *Metode penelitian Kualitatif Bidang Tafsir Al-Qur’an*. IAIN Ponorogo Press.
- Mustaqim, A. (2014). *Metode Penelitian Al-Qur’an dan Tafsir*. Idea Press.
- Nasr, S. H. (1996). *Religion and the Order of Nature*. Oxford University Press.
- Putra, A., Malia Hayati, S., & Yasir, M. (2021). Reinterpretation Of Polygamy Verses. *Qof*, 5(2), 173–186. <https://doi.org/10.30762/qof.v5i2.8>
- Razi, F. (1862). *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb Jilid III*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
- Romdoni, M. P. (2023). Asbab al-Nuzul in Surah Al-Baqarah (2): Mulla Huwaisy Perspective of Critical Matn and Sanad. *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas*, 3(3), 521–530. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v3i3.30400>
- Shihab, M. Q. (2019). *Wawasan Al-Qur’an*. Mizan.
- Supandi, M. D., Syaputra, M. B., Afthon, H., Pradana, A. R., & Munawar, A. M. (2025). Caliphate Paradigm as an Antithesis to Imperialism: A Theological and Geopolitical Analysis in the Discourse of Islamic and Western Civilizations. *JIS: Journal Islamic Studies*, 3(2), 119–130. <https://doi.org/10.71456/jis.v3i2.1394>

Thabathaba'i, M. H. (1955). *Al-Mizan fi tafsiri'l-Qur'an*. Dar al-Kitab al-Islamiyah,.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32493/amq.v2i2.44562>

Triono, A. (2023). *Sosioneurosains Perspektif Al-Qur'an: Studi Perilaku Manusia dan Faktor-Faktor yang Memengaruhinya*. Pascasarjana Universitas PTIQ Jakarta.