



Multidisciplinary Study of the Qur'an: Integrating Exegesis, Social Sciences, and the Humanities to Understand Contemporary Reality

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Abstract

The development of contemporary society presents various religious challenges, including intolerance, social polarization, cultural pluralism, and digital transformation, which require a contextual understanding of the Qur'an beyond a purely textual approach. However, Qur'anic studies have largely been dominated by normative-theological perspectives focusing on textual meanings, limiting their ability to explain the complexity of evolving social realities. This study aims to analyze the integration of Qur'anic exegesis and sociology as a multidisciplinary approach to understanding religious moderation based on Qur'anic values and to formulate a contextual model of Qur'anic studies relevant to contemporary society. This research employs a qualitative approach through library research. Data were collected from the Qur'an, classical and contemporary tafsir literature, academic books, and relevant scholarly articles, and analyzed through textual, contextual, and relevance analyses. The findings reveal that the integration of exegesis and sociology produces a more comprehensive understanding of religious moderation by combining normative analysis of Qur'anic verses with empirical analysis of social phenomena. This approach offers an integrative, contextual, and applicable model of Qur'anic studies capable of bridging divine messages and modern societal needs. The study concludes that a multidisciplinary paradigm provides an important alternative for developing contemporary Qur'anic studies methodologies that are responsive to social change and contemporary challenges.

Keywords: Multidisciplinary Qur'anic Studies; Exegesis and Sociology; Religious Moderation; Contemporary Society.



INTRODUCTION

The Quran is the primary source of Islamic teachings, containing universal values relevant to every space and time. However, the development of modern society, marked by increasing cultural pluralism, digital transformation, social polarization, and various religious challenges, demands a new approach to understanding the Quran's messages. To date, Quranic studies have tended to be dominated by a normative-theological approach that focuses on the meaning of the text, often leaving little room for analysis of the social context underlying people's religious practices. However, understanding the Quran requires not only a study of the text but also an analysis of the constantly changing social reality. Therefore, a multidisciplinary approach that integrates interpretation and sociology is crucial to bridge the gap between the message of revelation and the needs of contemporary society.(Sulton 2023)

Several previous studies have shown the development of a contextual approach in the study of the Qur'an. Abdullah Saeed emphasized the importance of a contextual approach in understanding the message of the Qur'an to remain relevant to modern social changes. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's hermeneutical study also shows that understanding the Qur'an needs to take into account the historical, linguistic, and social dimensions in which the text is understood.(Sufyan Muttaqin, Cecep Alba, dan Sansan Ziaul Haq n.d.) On the other hand, various studies on religious moderation emphasize that the values of tolerance, justice, and balance are important foundations in building social harmony in a multicultural society. However, most of these studies still discuss interpretation, hermeneutics, and religious moderation separately, so that not many have produced conceptual models that systematically integrate analysis of the Qur'anic text with sociological theories of religion in

understanding the phenomenon of religious moderation in the contemporary era.(Sufyan Muttaqin 2024) Based on these conditions, this article offers a novelty in the form of an integrated model of interpretation and sociology as a multidisciplinary approach in the study of the Qur'an that is contextual and applicable. Integration is carried out through three stages, namely text analysis to identify the values of religious moderation in the Qur'an, context analysis to understand the socio-historical conditions of society, and relevance analysis to connect the message of the Qur'an with contemporary problems. The problem of this research is how the integration of interpretation and sociology can build a model of understanding religious moderation that is relevant for modern society. This study uses a qualitative research method with a type of library research, which is sourced from the Qur'an, classical and contemporary commentaries, academic books, and relevant scientific journal articles. Through a descriptive-analytical method, this study aims to formulate a model of integrative, contextual, and solution-oriented study of the Qur'an in responding to the challenges of contemporary religious life.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with library research to examine the integration of interpretation and sociology in understanding religious moderation based on Qur'anic values. Primary data are the Qur'an and classical and contemporary commentaries, while secondary data are obtained from scientific journal articles, academic books, and research findings relevant to the study of the Qur'an, religious moderation, and the sociology of religion. Data collection is carried out through documentation techniques by reviewing, identifying, and classifying various library sources

that are appropriate to the research focus. Data analysis was conducted descriptively and analytically through three stages: text analysis to identify and interpret verses on religious moderation, context analysis to examine social phenomena using a sociology of religion perspective, and relevance analysis to connect Qur'anic values with contemporary realities. Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing various interpretations, theories, and previous research findings. Through these stages, this research aims to produce an integrative, contextual, and applicable model of Qur'anic study in addressing the challenges of religious life in modern society.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Phenomenon of Religious Moderation in the Contemporary Era

The Qur'an, as a universal and timeless guide to life, has historically served as the primary foundation for the formation of civilization and public ethics, particularly among Muslim communities in Indonesia. However, in current academic discourse, Qur'anic studies are often trapped within the dominance of a normative theological approach that emphasizes only the textual aspect this traditional approach, while important for the purification of doctrine, tends to view moderation, justice, and ethics as static ideal values rather than dynamic social practices shaped through complex sociocultural interactions, thereby leading to intellectual stagnation and hindering the Qur'an's messages from engaging with an increasingly diverse empirical reality. Today's reality faces significant challenges: a crisis of moderation that often remains merely a political slogan without internalization at the societal level structural poverty and economic inequality requiring ethical solutions grounded in *maqashid al-sharia*; gender inequality resulting from

patriarchal interpretations of texts that require a contextual and progressive approach, and digital transformation that is altering patterns of interaction, diminishing religious authority, and fueling polarization and radicalization among the younger generation while environmental issues urgently demand a theological response that affirms humanity's role as khalifah to maintain the balance of nature (mizan). (Wijaya, Sandy 2026) The clear gap between the Qur'an's normative message and social realities is evident in an epistemic asymmetry: symbolic support for tolerance and moderation does not always align with a practical understanding of a plural legal system or an inclusive social consciousness. Although studies on pluralism by figures such as Abdurrahman Wahid, the neo-modernist understanding of Nurcholish Madjid, or the eschatological inclusivity in Tafsir Al-Mizan Mizan by Allama Thabathaba'i have provided an important foundation for moderate Islam in Indonesia, such research often relies more on textual interpretation and elite rhetoric than on empirical observations of social practices on the ground, so the application of these ideas in diverse socio-political policies still requires further exploration. (Gafar, Lalu 2025) Therefore, this study urges bridging the gap between spiritual beliefs and empirical reality through a multidisciplinary approach that integrates exegesis, the social sciences (sociology and legal anthropology), and the humanities, so that the understanding of the Qur'an is not merely as a sacred text but also as a vital source of public ethics to address the challenges of bioethics, digital technology, and environmental crises. The novelty of this research lies in the development of a holistic analytical framework that integrates religious moderation, legal consciousness, and cultural pluralism, while its contribution is theoretical strengthening the methodology of interdisciplinary Islamic studies with a so. (Naftali Untung, Heru Cahyono 2025)

An understanding of the Qur'an that relies solely on a textual-normative approach has created a significant knowledge gap between the universal message of revelation and the ever-changing social reality; the focus on literal interpretation leads to intellectual stagnation, in which religious values are often viewed as moral theories that have no tangible impact at the societal level.(Kawangung 2019) This gap arises when the text is treated as a static entity, so that symbolic support for tolerance is not always reflected in an inclusive legal consciousness within a pluralistic society a concrete example can be seen in the digital transformation that has triggered polarization and a crisis of religious authority issues insufficiently addressed by textual references alone in the mismatch between the rhetoric of moderation and the legal practice of pluralism that interacts with customary and state law, as well as in the legitimization of gender inequality and the neglect of the roots of structural poverty due to textual interpretations that are patriarchal or disregard historical context. Therefore, multidisciplinary integration between exegesis, the social sciences (sociology and anthropology), and the humanities (ethics and hermeneutics) is essential for building a responsive paradigm of Qur'anic studies: the social sciences provide tools to view moderation as a dynamic social practice through a socio legal perspective; contextual hermeneutics emphasizes a humanistic and ethical reading to address bioethical issues and the environmental crisis by positioning humans as stewards who maintain balance; and the integration of religious knowledge with science prevents moral chaos while enabling ethical solutions to global issues such as the climate crisis and economic inequality. In theory, this multidisciplinary paradigm enriches the methodology of Islamic studies with analytical tools that transcend traditional sectarianism, and in practice serves as a foundation for policymakers, educators, and

practitioners to design strategies for religious literacy that are inclusive, adaptable to the times, and responsive to the needs of a just, multicultural society.(Subchi, Zulkifli, and Latifa 2022)

The Need for a Multidisciplinary Approach

Modern Qur'anic studies are at a critical juncture because the monodisciplinary textual paradigm has proven insufficient to address the complexities of our time; rigid normative-textual approaches are often unable to reflect sociocultural dynamics and empirical realities, rendering them inadequate in addressing contemporary issues such as radicalization, environmental crises, and digital disruption. In a multidisciplinary context, the science of exegesis (tafsir) continues to serve as the normative foundation for in-depth analysis of the asbab al-nuzul (reasons for revelation) and munasabah (contextual relationships) of verses, while the emphasis on maqashid (the protection of life, reason, and social justice) provides normative flexibility so that the text can engage with social change without compromising monotheism. The integration of the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, politics, economics) is crucial for illustrating how universal messages are applied in practice; for example, an analysis of zakat jurisprudence would be more significant if combined with income distribution theory so that it can function as a tool for poverty alleviation, while the humanities (history, philosophy, linguistics, hermeneutics, cultural studies) provide philosophical depth as well as hermeneutic tools such as the “double movement” to bridge the gap between the 7th century context and 21st century conditions.(Avionita and Syahidin 2024)

This integrative, interconnected synergy which resembles the metaphor of a spider's web rejects the separation between religious and secular

knowledge, prevents “moral chaos” resulting from the adoption of modernity without an Islamic value framework, and theoretically strengthens the epistemological foundation of Islamic studies while practically yielding implementable policies such as modules on religious moderation or fatwas on the digital economy that position the Qur’an as a functional, transformative, and relevant source of guidance for the Muslim community as they navigate an ever changing world. Certainly, the contemporary interpretation of the Qur’an is currently at a methodological crossroads because the dominance of a normative, textual approach over the centuries while preserving the originality of its teachings has often failed to capture the complexities of real life; modern challenges such as the environmental crisis, economic injustice, and technological disruption require interdisciplinary thinking that cannot be met by a text based reading in isolation, thereby creating an epistemic asymmetry in which the universal message of the Qur’an remains stuck as an abstract moral theory disconnected from social practice at the societal level. Criticism of the textual approach reveals that an emphasis on literalism produces rigid analysis or “frozen laws” that exist theologically but lose their function, and inflexibility in narrow interpretations while ignoring the socio-cultural context has the potential to create polarization and provide a pretext for legitimizing injustice, such as patriarchal bias in gender issues that disregards the principles of justice (‘adl) and equality (musawah), which are at the core of the maqashid al-sharia.(Bisanti et al. 2024)

Therefore, the epistemological integration of exegesis, the social sciences, and the humanities is essential: the science of exegesis remains the normative foundation, but it must be enriched by sociology and anthropology to map the actualization of revelation in social practice, as well as by history and Fazlur Rahman’s contextual hermeneutics of the “double-movement” to

connect 7th century values with 21st century needs. Integrative-interconnected synergy based on the “spider web” model Amin Abdullah rejects the separation between religious studies and general sciences and cautions against the “cultural chaos” arising from the application of modernity without an Islamic worldview; the views of experts such as M. Atho Mudzhar, who emphasize evidentialism, underscore the importance of incorporating field data, while the fact that interdisciplinary curricula have not yet fully transformed research practices indicates a gap between theory and practice. The proposed innovation is the creation of a comprehensive analytical framework that integrates interpretation, social practice, and legal consciousness; strategically, this multidisciplinary approach is not merely a methodology, but a means to ensure that the Qur’an continues to function as a dynamic guide for life (*rahmatan lil ‘alamin*) and can provide ethical solutions to humanitarian crises, social injustice, and the challenges of digital transformation.(Wijaya, Sandy 2026)

Interdisciplinary Integration

The integrative paradigm requires a shift away from the dichotomy between text and reality toward a holistic interdisciplinary methodology that integrates the social sciences with the humanities to avoid the “sacralization of the profane,” that is, the tendency to generalize local traditions into universal laws without distinguishing between revelatory messages and the transient nature of cultural contexts. This approach does not eliminate the function of the text; rather, it places revelation (*hadarah al-nas*) in an ongoing dialogue with science (*hadarah al-‘ilm*) and moral philosophy (*hadarah al-falsafah*), so that interpretation becomes dynamic, responsive, and socially responsible. Integration is carried out in a structured manner through a

process that connects textual analysis, the study of socio-historical context, and the application of contemporary relevance, so that interpretation is no longer a separate theoretical activity but a tool for social change. The initial step emphasizes in-depth textual analysis identifying key verses such as the principle of moderation (*wasathiyyah*), lexical studies, reviews of traditional and modern exegesis, and an emphasis on the *maqashid al-Qur'an* as a guide for interpretation to ensure that normative flexibility remains grounded in the objectives of sharia, such as the protection of life, reason, and social justice.(Ramadhan 2025)

historical context and its contemporary relevance, so that interpretation is no longer a separate theoretical activity but a tool for social change. The initial step emphasizes in depth textual analysis to identify key verses such as the principle of moderation (*wasathiyyah*), lexical studies, reviews of traditional and modern exegesis, and an emphasis on the *maqashid al-Qur'an* as a guide for interpretation so that normative flexibility remains grounded in the objectives of sharia, such as the protection of life, reason, and social justice. By using *maqashid* as a yardstick, exegetes can evaluate whether the literal text supports human interests or instead binds practices to a specific historical context, thereby losing its meaning. The second stage focuses on context: analyzing the *asbab al-nuzul* and the social dynamics of the time, and utilizing tools from the social sciences sociology, anthropology, political science, and economics to describe the interaction of revelation with social structures, power networks, and local culture; this approach transforms the perception of religion from a separate dogma into a dynamic and context-appropriate social practice. For example, sociological research on the implementation of *zakat* can identify institutional obstacles such as

corruption or patronage systems, thereby making policy proposals more precise and efficient.(Dirosat and Prenduan 2023)

The third stage connects the universal values of the Quran to contemporary issues from gender equality and economic justice to the environmental crisis and digital disruption by transforming principles such as *mizan* (the right to rule), *caliphate* (the right to be just), and *‘adl* (the right to be just) into practical solutions. In this stage, researchers develop policy guidelines, fatwas that take technological developments into account, and literacy modules for public education through an inclusive approach involving religious scholars, social scientists, policymakers, and civil society. Integrative synthesis is conducted through a “double movement” method: moving from contemporary realities to the historical context of the text to extract universal principles, then returning to apply these principles contextually today. The combination of qualitative (ethnography, in-depth interviews) and quantitative (surveys, policy analysis) methods yields empirical evidence that enriches the normative framework and enables pilot projects and impact evaluations as validation mechanisms.(Hołyst and Moy 2021)

However, an integrative approach also presents challenges: the risk of normative value reduction if non-theological disciplines are used without caution, a research gap in the form of the dominance of elite rhetoric without adequate field observation, and institutional barriers in curricula and research funding that do not support cross-disciplinary collaboration. Therefore, epistemic mechanisms are needed to maintain the integrity of revelation for example, interdisciplinary peer review for fatwas and policy recommendations as well as educational reforms that encourage interdisciplinary study centers and pilot programs involving local

communities. Theoretically, this integrative framework enriches the methodology of Islamic studies by incorporating tools of social analysis and contextual hermeneutics; practically, it produces applicable policy recommendations a moderation literacy module, fatwa guidelines for the digital economy, and evidence-based distribution policies that make the Qur'an a dynamic source of guidance for life (shalih li kulli zaman wa makan) without losing its sacred roots.(Afifi and Eliza 2025)

Understanding Religious Moderation Based on the Values of the Qur'an

Religious moderation according to the Qur'an is not only a theological compromise, but also a strong epistemic and ethical position based on the concept of wasathiyyah (middle path) stated in QS. Al-Baqarah: 143 positions Muslims as ummatan wasathan; the nature of wasathiyyah requires a balance between textual and contextual interpretation to avoid extremism (ghuluw) from both ultra-conservative and liberal sides. Supporting values such as tasamuh (tolerance), ta'adul (justice), and musawah (equality), as well as the principle of shura (deliberation) serve as very important ethical elements: tasamuh recognizes social diversity and encourages non-violence, ta'adul and musawah emphasize that justice and equality go beyond a literal understanding of the text especially in the context of gender and human rights while shura serves as a foundation for inclusive governance that allows truth to be tested intra subjectively. The evolution of the interpretation paradigm reflects a shift from rigid theological speculation to a transformative interpretation; Figures such as Fazlur Rahman, through the double movement method, provide space for extracting ideal moral values from the text, while the maqashidi, ma'na cum maghza approaches, and the concept of legal

flexibility (Muhammad Syahrur) enhance the ability of interpretation to face today's socio-cultural challenges.(Wildan 2025)

Facing modern challenges radicalism and polarization resulting from narrow interpretations, digital disruption that undermines conventional authority, and cultural pluralism that requires a comprehensive understanding wasathiyyah serves as a tool for deradicalization, a foundation for digital ethics, and a framework for recognizing diversity. Although the discourse of moderation has expanded, there is a significant research gap: many studies remain trapped in normative rhetoric without empirical observation; the proposed innovation is a semi-permeable integrative model, combining revelation (hadarah al-nass), science (hadarah al-‘ilm), and philosophy (hadarah al-falsafah). The proposed applicable model Contextual Synthesis consists of textual maqashidi analysis to derive the underlying purpose of the text, socio empirical analysis to involve real world data in the interpretation process, and transformative implementation that produces solution oriented products (digital economy fatwas, mizan based environmental policies). Therefore, this multidisciplinary approach not only strengthens the theoretical basis of religious moderation as an integrative interconnective epistemology, but also provides practical guidance for educators and policymakers to adapt Qur'anic values into progressive, inclusive social regulations and maintain civilizational harmony amidst global dynamics.(Mahbub Ghozali 2023)

A Contextual and Relevant Model of Quranic Study for Contemporary Society

Contemporary Qur'anic studies now face complex methodological challenges because the dominance of normative-theological approaches is often not responsive enough to modern social, cultural, and intellectual

dynamics; the sharp separation between revealed knowledge and acquired knowledge (social sciences/humanities) has made religious teaching far from modern reality while scientific progress moves apart from religious values, so that without a new framework Muslims risk clinging to an orthodoxy that is losing relevance.(Rusidi and Istiqomah 2025) Therefore, the integration between the science of interpretation and sociology becomes an epistemological necessity that is based on an integrative-interconnective paradigm or the "spider web" model which theoretically combines classical interpretation tools (asbab al-nuzul, munasabah, maqashid) with sociological theory to read the Qur'an as a living and coherent system of meaning. Within this framework, the sociology of religion functions to map the social, political, economic, and cultural contexts that are relevant to interpretation, while contextualist epistemology (such as the thinking of Abdullah Saeed) emphasizes the active role of the interpreter so that the Qur'an remains shâlih li kulli zaman wa makân; the semantic approach traces the weltanschauung of the Qur'an through the relationship between concepts synchronically and diachronically so that revelation is seen as a dynamic value system, not just a static law.(Agung Nugroho Reformis Santono 2024)

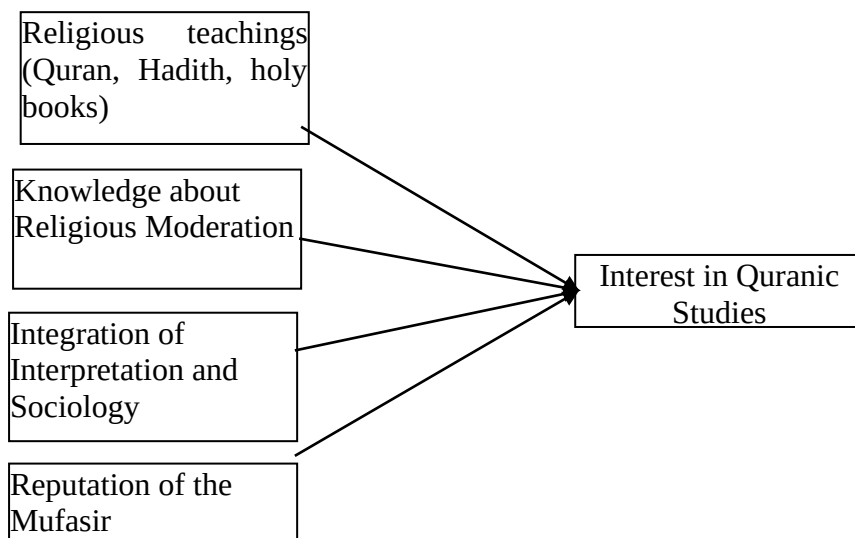
The process of forming a contextual-solution-oriented interpretation proceeds through systematic stages: identifying the historical context of the revelation of verses to capture the maqshad al-ayat; sociolinguistic analysis that links the structure of the text with the language practices of society, compiling a hierarchy of values that distinguishes between universal values, fundamental values (maqasid/maslahah), and instructional values; and an analysis of contemporary relevance (double movement) that connects historical meaning with current practical needs.(Achmad and Jember 2021) This integrative approach has proven effective in responding to current

phenomena: it facilitates religious moderation and pluralism through the reinterpretation of problematic verses in their historical context, emphasizes the mandate of justice as the basis of redistributive policies to overcome social inequality, and opens up space for dialogue between the Qur'an and digital transformation issues such as hoaxes, online radicalism, and technology ethics without sacrificing textual authenticity. However, there is a significant research gap: many studies are still thematic fragmentary or rely on interpretation methods without the support of sociological empirical data; The proposed novelty is the Conceptual-Integrative Interpretation paradigm that places Ulumul Qur'an as a methodological foundation that synergizes closely with social sciences to produce proactive interpretations. Theoretically, this model strengthens the position of Qur'anic studies as an adaptive and scientific discipline capable of bridging the sacredness of revelation with profane reality, methodologically, it offers practical guidance in the form of analytical stages that combine linguistic precision with observation of social change, so that the Qur'an remains a functional guide to life (rahmatan lil 'alamin) in facing the disruption of the times without losing its theological roots.(Faiz 2024)

Table 1. Analysis of the Dimensions Forming the Understanding of Religious Moderation in Multidisciplinary Qur'anic Studies

No.	Organization...	Remarks....
1	Interpretation Science	Used to understand the meaning of the Al-Qur'an text through language studies, asbab al-nuzul, munasabah verses, and maqashid of the Al-Qur'an.

2	Sociology of Religion	Used to analyze social phenomena, religious practices, and the dynamics of relationships between individuals and groups in society.
3	Study of Religious Moderation	Used to identify the values of tolerance, justice, balance, and middle attitude (wasathiyyah) in the Qur'an.
4	Multidisciplinary Approach	Used to integrate text and context analysis to produce an understanding of the Qur'an that is contextual, applicable, and relevant to contemporary reality.



Picture 1. Identification of Conceptual Constructs in Multidisciplinary Qur'anic Studies

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that a multidisciplinary approach combining interpretation and sociology is a strategic step in advancing Qur'anic studies that are more contextual and in line with the realities of modern society. An interpretive approach that emphasizes understanding the text must be combined with social analysis so that the messages in the Qur'an are not only understood normatively, but also can address various contemporary problems experienced by society. By analyzing the text, context, and relevance, the value of religious moderation in the Qur'an can be realized as a basis for building a tolerant, just, and harmonious social life amidst the dynamic changes of the times. This study emphasizes that the combination of interpretation and sociology provides a paradigm for Qur'anic studies that is more integrative, applicable, and solution-oriented to various modern challenges. This model not only strengthens the relationship between the message of revelation and social conditions, but also expands the contribution of Qur'anic research to the advancement of Islamic science and the resolution of issues in modern society. Thus, subsequent research should expand integration with other disciplines and increase empirical studies on the application of Qur'anic values in the social, educational, and public policy fields so that the relevance of multidisciplinary Qur'anic studies becomes stronger and more sustainable.

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