

Managing the Transformation of Qur'anic Studies: Research Management, Thematic Diversification, and Epistemological Change in Indonesian Islamic Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The development of Qur'anic Studies in Islamic higher education has increasingly expanded from classical tafsir toward thematic, contextual, and Living Qur'an approaches. However, the extent to which this thematic diversification is accompanied by methodological and epistemological transformation remains underexplored. This study analyzes the development and management of Qur'anic Studies research at UIN Raden Intan Lampung and UIN Raden Fatah Palembang through Amin Abdullah's integrative-interconnected perspective. The study employs a qualitative design combined with bibliometric and descriptive-analytical approaches, analyzing undergraduate thesis patterns, publication trends, and keyword networks. The findings reveal two institutional orientations. UIN Raden Intan Lampung tends to develop analytical and multidisciplinary research addressing religious moderation, national ethics, and public health. In contrast, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang demonstrates a stronger orientation toward phenomenological and community-based Living Qur'an studies. Both institutions have diversified research themes beyond classical tafsir, expanding Qur'anic Studies toward social practices and contemporary issues. However, the analysis identifies a gap between thematic diversification and methodological transformation: descriptive research remains prevalent, while critical reflection, epistemological comparison, interdisciplinary integration, international collaboration, and global publication remain limited. From Amin Abdullah's perspective, this indicates a partial transformation of Qur'anic Studies. The study contributes by identifying a pattern in which thematic diversification develops faster than epistemological and methodological transformation, suggesting the need for stronger connections among Qur'anic texts, Islamic intellectual traditions, academic disciplines, social realities, and institutional research ecosystems.

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INTRODUCTION

Research management has become increasingly important for Islamic higher education institutions seeking to strengthen academic quality, research productivity, and institutional competitiveness in an increasingly globalized higher education landscape (Badrudin et al., 2025; Hatija et al., 2025; Khoir et al., 2025; Mispani et al., 2026; Mukhammad & Bon, 2026; Muslim et al., 2025; Syarip et al., 2026). Yet, the expansion of research activities does not automatically produce a sustainable research culture. Previous studies indicate that research performance in higher education is shaped by multiple interconnected factors, including institutional research policies, funding availability, researcher collaboration, incentives, access to reputable publication outlets, and participation in international academic networks (Avdeeva & Kokodey, 2024; Bahtilla, 2023; Hermawati et al., 2018; Kazmi, 2003; Nellitawati et al., 2024; Shittu et al., 2025; Sundari et al., 2025). While some studies emphasize these structural constraints, others demonstrate that systematic research management, institutional support, and appropriate incentive mechanisms can foster a more sustainable research ecosystem (Al, Al, and Alnajjar 2013; Aprianoro and Susanto 2024; Hermanu et al. 2022). On the other hand, the optimistic view emphasizes that with a structured research management strategy, including strengthening institutional policies and incentives for lecturers and students, Islamic universities can create a sustainable research ecosystem and be able to compete globally (Budiyanti & Parhan, 2024; Huda et al., 2025; Irham, 2025; Jima'ain et al., 2022; Mokodompit et al., 2025; Purwaningrum, 2016). This tension raises an important question for Islamic higher education: how can research management move beyond the production of publication outputs toward the formation of a sustainable research ecosystem capable of generating relevant, collaborative, and internationally competitive scholarship?

This question is particularly significant in Indonesian Islamic higher education, where research has a dual function: strengthening institutional academic performance and contributing to the development of Islamic knowledge in response to contemporary social and religious transformations. Islamic universities are therefore expected not only to increase the quantity of scholarly publications but also to develop research cultures that connect Islamic intellectual traditions with social sciences, humanities, and contemporary empirical realities (Bahtilla, 2023; Kusnadi et al., 2025). Muhammad Amin Abdullah, for example, argues that Islamic higher education needs to reformulate its intellectual and methodological orientation so that Islamic scholarship can move beyond predominantly textual and normative approaches toward more contextual, interdisciplinary, and socially responsive forms of knowledge (M. A. Abdullah, 2017). This concern is particularly relevant to Qur'anic Studies, where conventional text-based approaches increasingly encounter the need to engage with social, cultural, and contemporary religious phenomena. Thus, sustainable research management in Islamic higher education should be understood not merely as an administrative mechanism for increasing publications, but as an institutional process for developing research capacity, methodological innovation, collaboration, and knowledge production.

Existing studies on research and Islamic higher education can broadly be divided into three strands. The first examines research management from an institutional perspective, emphasizing research policies, funding, incentives, infrastructure, and organizational support as determinants of research productivity (Bahtilla 2023; Hermanu et al. 2022; Huda, Fitriana, and Lubis 2025). The second focuses on the intellectual transformation of Islamic higher education, particularly the need to integrate Islamic scholarship with social sciences and humanities and to develop contextual approaches to contemporary religious problems (Açikgenç 2008; Abdullah 2017; Saeed 1999; Suharto and Khuriyah 2014). The third concerns developments in Qur'anic Studies, including the expansion from conventional interpretive approaches toward contextual and socially oriented approaches such as *Living Qur'an*, which examines the interaction between Qur'anic texts and lived social realities (Berliana et al., 2026;

Rafiq, 2014, 2021, 2022; Sulaeman et al., 2026). These studies provide important insights, but they largely address institutional management, epistemological transformation, and methodological development as separate issues. Less attention has been given to how research management at the program level connects these dimensions into a sustainable research ecosystem, particularly within Qur'anic Studies programs.

In the context of Islamic universities, the sustainability of research management not only serves as an indicator of academic progress, but also as a foundation in developing Islamic thought that is relevant to the dynamics of the times (Achruh & Sukirman, 2024; Açikgenç, 2008; Anam et al., 2024; Azmiana et al., 2025; Karingayi, 2025; Qasserras, 2024). Islamic universities, including State Islamic University (UIN) Raden Fatah Palembang and UIN Raden Intan Lampung, have a great responsibility in developing a research culture that is not only productive but also sustainable (Assegaf, Zainiyah, and Fahmi 2022; Saeed 1999; Suharto and Khuriyah 2014). A strong research culture enables academicians to produce innovative scientific studies, contribute to the development of Islamic science, and answer contemporary social and religious challenges (Alsyabani et al., 2024; Amirah et al., 2025; Mulyono & Wekke, 2018; Zaman, 1985). Therefore, Islamic universities must be able to build a research management system that not only focuses on publication output but also on creating an academic environment that encourages collaborative, innovative, and problem-solving-oriented research.

One of the academic units that has a strategic role in strengthening Islamic research is the Al-Qur'an and Tafsir (IAT) Study Program at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and UIN Raden Intan Lampung. This study program is not only tasked with developing the study of Qur'anic interpretation from classical and contemporary perspectives, but also responsible for responding to intellectual challenges that develop in society with (Alamin et al., 2024; Ashfiya', 2024; Jamil & Khaled, 2025; Mustaqim & Syamsudin, 2002). However, in its implementation, there are various challenges faced in managing sustainable research. These challenges include limited research resources, low levels of scientific publications by students and lecturers, and lack of academic collaboration across institutions (Abdullah 2017; Fathoni et al. 2024). In addition, there is still a gap between literature-based research and more applicable field-based research, such as Living Qur'an studies that highlight the interaction of Qur'anic texts with social phenomena (Rafiq 2021, 2022).

Furthermore, there are methodological challenges that need to be addressed in building sustainable research in the field of Qur'anic studies. Most student and faculty research is still focused on traditional approaches using *tahlili*, *muqarin*, and *maudhu'i* methods, while exploration of multidisciplinary approaches is still limited. Additionally, the lack of student involvement in lecturers' research projects and the absence of academic incentives for young researchers hinder the acceleration of a productive research culture. In fact, fostering a vibrant research ecosystem requires strategies that include integrating research into the curriculum, optimizing research funding, and increasing access to international scientific publications.

In an academic study on Islamic higher education, Muhammad Amin Abdullah highlights the role of Islamic higher education in responding to the challenges of globalization and religious conservatism. He emphasized that Islamic higher education in Indonesia has great potential in offering educational innovation and transformation, both in terms of material and research methodology (M. A. Abdullah, 2014). One of the important points raised is the need for reformulation of teaching and research methods in Islamic higher education to be more in line with the development of science, especially in the field of social sciences and humanities. Abdullah also underlines that Islamic universities must play a strategic role in building academic discourse that is not only textual and normative, but also contextual and applicable, so as to provide solutions to complex socio-religious challenges.

Furthermore, in a global context, Abdullah , sees that Islamic higher education in Indonesia has better bargaining power compared to Islamic education systems in the Middle East and South Asia. This is due to the moderate and inclusive approach adopted by many Islamic universities in Indonesia, which allows them to become alternative models in the development of Islamic research and education that are more relevant to global dynamics. However, he also emphasized that there are still various challenges, especially in terms of strengthening research management, improving the quality of scientific publications, and integrating Islamic science with social sciences and humanities. Taking into account the above findings, this study aims to explore the challenges and best practices in managing sustainable research management in Islamic higher education, especially in the context of the Qur'anic Science and Tafsir Study Program at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang and UIN Raden Intan Lampung. This study is expected to contribute in developing strategic recommendations for academic managers to improve the effectiveness of the research management system and strengthen the competitiveness of Islamic higher education in the global arena.

METHODS

The research method used in this study is organized in a narrative and descriptive manner with a bibliometric-based qualitative research approach to provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of student research management in the Qur'anic Science and Tafsir Study Program at two institutions, namely UIN Raden Intan Lampung and UIN Raden Fatah Palembang (Harianto 2022; Nirwana et al. 2024) . The main data was obtained from a collection of theses and theses of students in 2021 which reflects the diversity of themes and methodological approaches (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003; Peterson 2019) . At UIN Raden Intan Lampung, there are 27 thesis titles that raise themes ranging from Living Qur'an, thematic interpretation, comparative interpretation, linguistic analysis, to socio-historical studies, which show students' efforts to integrate text analysis with contemporary issues such as religious moderation, national ethics, and public health policy. Meanwhile, at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, there were also 27 thesis titles dominated by the study of Living Qur'an and thematic interpretation, focusing on the practical application of Qur'anic values in social life as well as the development of interpretation studies at the master's level through the approach of Nusantara interpretation, comparative interpretation, and hermeneutics.

To complement the primary data, this research also utilizes secondary data obtained from international scientific publications indexed in the Scopus database. This bibliometric data was accessed through the Publish or Perish application (Abdelwahab et al. 2025; Eckert 2018) , and then explored using Voyant Tools (Gaurav and Anand 2022) . Through the data processing, visualizations such as word clouds and frequency graphs were obtained that allowed the identification of dominant keywords and patterns of distribution of themes that emerged in Quranic Studies research in Indonesia. A descriptive-analytical approach was used to synthesize the findings from both data sources, so as to obtain a comprehensive picture of the gaps, strengths, and challenges in student research management. This analytical process involved an in-depth examination of the narratives contained in the students' theses and theses and a comparison with broader research trends and focuses in international publications. As such, this study focuses not only on secondary and primary data collection, but also on contextual interpretations that are rich in nuance, so as to produce strategic recommendations that are applicable to the development of research management in Islamic higher education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Management at UIN Raden Intan Lampung

Like UIN Raden Fatah, UIN Raden Intan Lampung also has a concentration of research in the field of tafsir, but with a wider diversification. Student theses at this university not only address the themes of "Living Qur'an" and "Thematic Interpretation", but also studies in "Comparative Interpretation", "Socio-Historical", and "Linguistic Analysis". At the master's level, UIN Raden Intan Lampung seems to emphasize comparative studies of various styles of interpretation. For example, there are studies that compare the views of Sayyid Qutb with Buya Hamka or classical tafsir with modern tafsir. In addition, research themes also involve contemporary issues such as Islamic moderation, state ethics, and tafsir studies on public health policies. Students at the master's and doctoral levels are also encouraged to conduct research collaborations with other institutions to broaden the scope of their academic studies.

Table 1 . Undergraduate Thesis at UIN Raden Intan Lampung

No.	Name	Title	Type of Research	Year
1	Agustina, Riza	Ecological Movement in Muhammadiyah Student Association of South Sumatra Regional Leadership (Living Qur'an Study of Surah Al-Baqarah: 30)	Living Qur'an	2021
2	Alzumandani, Muhammad Fajar	Peace According to the Qur'anic Perspective (An Analytical Study of Tahlili's Tafsir in Al-Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat 9-10)	Tafsir Tahlili	2021
3	Anggraeni, Ayu	Menstruation in the Qur'an (Tafsir Tahlili Study of the Verse on Women's Health QS. Al-Baqarah 222)	Tafsir Tahlili	2021
4	Arnita, Dina	The Management of Orphans' Donation Assets (Living Qur'an Study QS. An-Nisa Verse 2 at Mahabbatullah Ummi Orphanage Palembang)	Living Qur'an	2021
5	Athoillah, Achmad Brian	The Qur'anic Perspective in Responding to Failure (Thematic Interpretation Study of the Lafazh Fasyila, Khaba and Khasara)	Thematic Interpretation	2021
6	Adib, Muhammad	Methodology of Interpretation of Anthropomorphism Verses (Linguistic Analysis Study of Tafsir Al-Munir by Wahbah Al-Zuhaili)	Linguistic Analysis	2021
7	Ali, Muhammad	The Oath of Allah in the Qur'an (A Comparative Study of Ibn Kathir's Tafsir and Al-Azhar's Tafsir)	Comparative Interpretation	2021
8	Bin Rased, Raoff	Interpretation of the Punishment of Theft in QS. Al-Maidah Verse 38 (A Study of Wahbah Az-Zuhaili and Muhammad Syahrur)	Comparative Interpretation	2021
9	Eryanti, Eryanti	Nikah in the Qur'an (A Study of the Practice of Seimbangan Nikah in Lekis Rejo Village, Lubuk Raja District, Ogan Komering Ulu Regency)	Living Qur'an	2021
10	Fajar, Kalih	The Role of Man in Realizing a Prosperous Country in the Perspective of the Qur'an: A Thematic Study	Thematic Interpretation	2021

11	Husna, Auliya Hayatul	Contextualization of the Meaning of Milk Al-Aiman in the Qur'an (Tafsir Tahlili Study of QS. An-Nisa': 36)	Tafsir Tahlili	2021
12	Izmawanti, Izmawanti	Ayat Musawah (Understanding of Alawiyyin Ulama Leaders of Palembang on Al-Qur'an surah Al-Hujurat verse 13)	Living Qur'an	2021
13	Kamalia, Malikhatul	The Meaning of Qana'ah and Its Implementation in the Present (Tafsir Tahlili Study of QS. Al-Hajj [22]: 36)	Tafsir Tahlili	2021
14	Khopipa, Ripa	Alternative Treatment of Hereditary Problems with the Qur'an (Living Qur'an Study of Mr. Zakaria's Treatment Method in Tanjung Atap Village, Tanjung Batu Sub-District, Ogan Ilir District)	Living Qur'an	2021
15	Khudzaifah, Muhammad	Materialism in the Perspective of Tafsir Al-Azhar by Buya Hamka	Thematic Interpretation	2021
16	Kisdayani, Aisyah Novita	Prevention of Covid-19 Transmission in the Qur'anic Perspective (A Socio-Historical Study)	Socio-Historical	2021
17	Kurniasih, Uun	Understanding the Meaning of Rabb in the Qur'an : A Thematic Study in the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs	Thematic Interpretation	2021
18	Kusuma, Tri Satria Hadi	Ummatan Wasathan in the Qur'an and its Implications for the Life of the Nation and State in Indonesia	Thematic Interpretation	2021
19	Martina, Yulia	The Practice of Medicine with Rajah (Living Qur'an Study in Kotanegara Village, Madang Suku II Subdistrict, OKU Timur Regency)	Living Qur'an	2021
20	Nikmah, Syarifatun	The Tradition of Reciting Surah Al-Insyirah as Wirid in Prayer (A Study of Living Qur'an in Pesantren Tahfidzul Qur'an Putri Al-Lathifiyyah Palembang)	Living Qur'an	2021

From the list of theses of students majoring in Qur'anic Science and Tafsir (IAT) at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, it can be seen that the research conducted reflects a wide variety of methodologies and themes. For example, there is research in the field of "Living Qur'an" which explores how Qur'anic verses are practiced in people's social lives. Some theses discuss topics such as ecological movements in Islamic organizations, the tradition of reciting certain verses in religious rituals, and the application of Qur'anic verses in traditional healing methods.

On the other hand, research in the fields of "Comparative Interpretation" and "Linguistic Analysis" shows a more critical academic approach in understanding the Qur'anic text. For example, studies that compare Ibn Kathir's tafsir with Al-Azhar's tafsir, or linguistic analysis of interpretive methods in certain tafsir books. Studies like this contribute to enriching the treasures of tafsir science and provide a new perspective in understanding religious texts.

The diversity of themes and approaches in tafsir research at UIN Raden Intan Lampung reflects the growing academic dynamics. With a focus on various research methods and contemporary issues, this university not only plays a role in the development of tafsir science, but also in building a more contextual and applicable understanding of the teachings of the Qur'an in the lives of modern society.

Table 2 . Master Thesis UIN Raden Intan Lampung

No.	Name	Title	Type of Research	Year
1	Abdul Syukri, SYU	The Miracle of Memorizing the Qur'ān	Study of Miracles	2021
2	Fahrudin, Majid	عابثلا دبحوت رانملا ريسفتو دابعلا ريخ يدي داشرلا لبيس يباتك يف (فتر اقم قسارد)	Comparative Interpretation	2021
3	Januri, Jnr	Blasphemy in the Perspective of Tafsir Fi Zhilal Al-Qur'an	Thematic Interpretation	2021
4	Joko, Imam Saputra	Hypocrisy: Between Nash and Reality (A Study of Sayyid Qutb and Buya Hamka's Tafsir)	Comparative Interpretation	2021
5	Luthfi, Farhan Desky	The Sufistic Interpretation Style of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi (Study of Tafsīr Kulliyât Rasâil Al-Nûr)	Sufistic Interpretation	2021
6	Riyadlotu, Sholikhah	The Qur'an Confronting Hypocrites in the View of the Mufasssirs (A Study of Classical and Modern Interpretation)	Comparative Interpretation	2021
7	Sigit, Budiyanto	The Ethics of Achieving Position in Qur'anic Perspective (Comparative Study of Tafsir Al-Jami' li Ahkam Al-Qur'an and Tafsir Al-Azhar in the Story of Prophet Yusuf AS)	Comparative Interpretation	2021
8	Slamet, Faozi	Moderation Paradigm in Hamka's Interpretation and Its Implementation in the Concept of Statehood (Study on Tafsīr al-Azhar)	Thematic Interpretation	2021
9	Venny, Zulmiani	Medicinal Foods in the Qur'an and their Correlation in COVID-19 Prevention	Thematic Interpretation	2021

At the master's level, research at UIN Raden Intan Lampung increasingly leads to comparative studies, which emphasize comparisons between various styles of tafsir. Some studies compare the thoughts of figures such as Sayyid Qutb with Buya Hamka, or compare classical and modern tafsir. This approach provides greater insight into the dynamics of Qur'anic interpretation in various social, historical and scientific contexts. In addition, research themes are also growing to include contemporary issues. Studies on Islamic moderation, state ethics, and public health policy from a tafsir perspective have become an important part of academic research at the university. This multidisciplinary approach makes a significant contribution in understanding the relevance of the Qur'an in facing the challenges of modern times. Students at master's and doctoral level are also encouraged to conduct research collaborations with other institutions to broaden the scope of their academic studies. This collaboration includes cooperation with other universities, research institutions, and international academic communities. Thus, the research results produced have a wider impact and can contribute to the development of interpretive science globally.

Research Management at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang

State Islamic University (UIN) Raden Fatah Palembang emphasizes student research on the study of tafsir and thematic studies in the Qur'an. This is reflected in the dominance of research themed "Living Qur'an" and "Thematic Interpretation" in the list of theses and theses produced. This focus reflects a strong academic approach in understanding and applying Qur'anic values in social life. Research management at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang covers various aspects, ranging from research

planning, resource management, academic guidance, to publication of research results. Student research planning is directed at strengthening understanding of Qur'anic interpretation with an approach based on classical and contemporary studies. Each student is encouraged to develop research that is relevant to social, cultural, and Islamic issues that develop in society.

In terms of resource management, the university provides various research facilities that include access to classical and modern sources of tafsir, academic guidance by expert lecturers, as well as opportunities to directly study social practices in the community through the "Living Qur'an" method. In addition, various discussion forums and seminars are organized to support the exchange of academic ideas and deepen understanding of Qur'anic interpretation. Academic guidance at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang integrates approaches based on classical tafsir books such as Tafsir Ibn Katsir, Tafsir Al-Misbah, to modern hermeneutic studies. Students are also equipped with tafsir research methodology skills in order to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the Qur'anic texts. This approach allows students to explore various perspectives in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an in accordance with the growing social and cultural context.

Table 3 . Undergraduate Thesis at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang

No.	Name	Title	Type of Research	Year
1	Agustina, Riza	Ecological Movement in Muhammadiyah Student Association of South Sumatra Regional Leadership (Living Qur'an Study of Surah Al-Baqarah: 30)	Living Qur'an	2021
2	Alzumandani, Muhammad Fajar	Peace According to the Qur'anic Perspective (An Analytical Study of Tahlili Tafsir in Al-Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat 9-10)	Tafsir Tahlili	2021
3	Anggraeni, Ayu	Menstruation in the Qur'an (Tahlili Interpretation Study of the Verse on Women's Health QS. Al-Baqarah 222)	Tafsir Tahlili	2021
4	Arnita, Dina	The Management of Orphans' Donation Assets (Study of Living Qur'an QS. An-Nisa Verse 2 at Mahabbatuh Ummi Orphanage Palembang)	Living Qur'an	2021
5	Athoillah, Achmad Brian	The Qur'anic Perspective in Responding to Failure (Thematic Interpretation Study of the Lafazh Fasyila, Khaba and Khasara)	Thematic Interpretation	2021
6	Adib, Muhammad	Methodology of Interpretation of Anthropomorphism Verses (Linguistic Analysis Study on Tafsir Al-Munir by Wahbah Al-Zuhaili)	Linguistic Analysis	2021
7	Ali, Muhammad	Allah's Oaths in the Qur'an (A Comparative Study of Ibn Kathir's Tafsir and Al-Azhar's Tafsir)	Interpretation Comparative	2021
8	Bin Rased, Raoff	Interpretation of the Punishment of Theft in QS. Al-Maidah Verse 38 (A Study of Wahbah Az-Zuhaili and Muhammad Syahrur)	Comparative Interpretation	2021
9	Eryanti, Eryanti	Nikah in the Qur'an Study of the Practice of Seimbangan Nikah in Lekis Rejo Village,	Living Qur'an	2021

			Lubuk Raja Subdistrict, Ogan Komering Ulu Regency		
10	Fajar, Kalih	Miftah	The Role of Man in Realizing a Prosperous Country in the Perspective of the Qur'an: A Thematic Study	Thematic Interpretation	2021
11	Husna, Hayatul	Auliya	Contextualization of the Meaning of Milk Al-Aiman in the Qur'an (Tafsir Tahlili Study of QS. An-Nisa': 36)	Tafsir Tahlili	2021
12	Izmawanti, Izmawanti		Ayat Musawah (Understanding of Alawiyin Ulama Leaders of Palembang on Al-Qur'an Surah Al-Hujurat Verse 13)	Living Qur'an	2021
13	Kamalia, Malikhatul		The Meaning of Qana'ah and Its Implementation in the Present (Tafsir Tahlili Study of QS. Al-Hajj [22]: 36)	Tafsir Tahlili	2021
14	Khopipa, Ripa		Alternative Treatment of Hereditary Problems with the Qur'an (Living Qur'an Study of Mr. Zakaria's Treatment Method in Tanjung Atap Village, Tanjung Batu Sub-District, Ogan Ilir District)	Living Qur'an	2021
15	Khudzaifah, Muhammad		Materialism in the Perspective of Tafsir Al-Azhar by Buya Hamka	Thematic Interpretation	2021
16	Kisdayani, Aisyah Novita		Prevention of COVID-19 Transmission in the Qur'anic Perspective (A Socio-Historical Study)	A Socio-Historical Study	2021
17	Kurniasih, Uun		Understanding the Meaning of Rabb in the Qur'an: A Thematic Study in the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs	Thematic Interpretation	2021
18	Kusuma, Satria Hadi	Tri	Ummatan Wasathan in the Qur'an and its Implications for the Life of the Nation and State in Indonesia	Thematic Interpretation	2021
19	Martina, Yulia		The Practice of Medicine with Rajah (Living Qur'an Study in Kotanegara Village, Madang Suku II Subdistrict, OKU Timur Regency)	Living Qur'an	2021
20	Nikmah, Syarifatun		The Tradition of Reciting Surah Al-Insyirah as Wirid in Prayer (A Study of Living Qur'an in Pesantren Tahfidzul Qur'an Putri Al-Lathifiyyah Palembang)	Living Qur'an	2021

Theses of IAT students at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang in 2021 show a strong tendency towards the study of Qur'anic interpretation with various approaches, especially in the study of Living Qur'an, thematic interpretation, and tahlili interpretation. From the list available, it appears that research oriented towards religious practices in society is quite dominant. Living Qur'an is a popular approach, which can be seen from the number of theses that examine how Qur'anic verses are implemented in everyday life. This shows the interest of students to connect the sacred text with the social reality that develops in the middle of the Muslim community of South Sumatra.

However, in the Living Qur'an approach, research is often descriptive rather than analytical. There is a tendency to accept existing practices without delving deeper into how such understandings are formed, changed or even debated in a wider context. The lack of use of social theory and the lack of a critical perspective means that some studies appear to simply confirm existing practices without

questioning their relevance or validity from the point of view of tafsir or Islamic law. Some studies, such as those that examine treatment with rajah or the recitation of certain surahs as wirid, for example, could still be enriched by analyzing the history and epistemology of the practice. In addition, the thematic interpretation approach is also widely used, which shows students' interest in studying certain themes in the Qur'an in more depth. Research on failure, materialism, and the concept of an ideal society in the Qur'an shows that students are beginning to explore more philosophical and contextual issues. Nevertheless, there are some things that can still be strengthened. For example, research with a thematic approach often runs the risk of reducing meaning because it limits the study to one particular theme without considering its relationship to the overall narrative in the Qur'an.

From the overall list of theses, it appears that there is a strong academic interest in Qur'anic studies, but there is still ample room for deepening methodological approaches and critical analysis. The theses could be further enriched by an interdisciplinary approach, combining tafsir with sociology, anthropology or even philosophy. In addition, these studies could also be more relevant if they consider comparisons with contemporary Islamic thought and the modern challenges facing Muslims today.

Table 4 . Master Thesis UIN Raden Fatah Palembang

No.	Name	Title	Type of Research	Year
1	Bayyinah, Iffatul	Discourse of <i>Isrā'īliyyāt</i> in Nusantara Tafsir (Study of Tafsir Marah Labīd, Tafsir Al-Ibrīz, and Tafsir Al-Misbah)	Tafsir Nusantara	2022
2	Khozinul, Alim	Interpretation of Anthropomorphism Verses between Cultural Islam and Transnational Islam	Thematic Interpretation	2022
3	Khozinul, Alim	Interpretation of Anthropomorphism Verses between Cultural Islam and Transnational Islam (Article in Journal)	Scientific Articles	2022
4	Bil Choiri, Maksudi	Household Conflict Resolution according to Javanese Tafsir (Comparative Study between Tafsir Al-Ibrīz and Tafsir Al-Iklīl)	Comparative Interpretation	2024
5	Jaya, Mandra	The Relevance of Sufism Principles to the Basic Values of Pancasila in Tafsir Al-Azhar	Thematic Interpretation	2024
6	Novita, Ida	Reconstruction of the Meaning of Zina and Mushrik QS. Al-Nūr Verse 3 based on Muhammad Syahrur's Theory of Asynonymity	Thematic Interpretation	2024
7	Yusuf, Yusuf	Interpretation of Hāfīzh Al-Qurān in Tafsīr Al-Misbah and Tafsīr Al-Azhar: A Study of Hans-Georg Gadamer's Hermeneutic Analysis	Hermeneutic Interpretation	2024

Master Theses from students of the Qur'anic Science and Tafsir (IAT) study program at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang show diversity in approaches and themes raised. The research conducted reflects a more in-depth academic effort than the undergraduate thesis, with a focus on analyzing tafsir in a cultural context, inter-tafsir comparisons, as well as hermeneutic and philosophical studies. However, there are several aspects that can be criticized and elaborated further, both in terms of methodology and academic relevance. The main tendency that can be seen is the attention to Nusantara interpretations, thematic interpretations, comparative interpretations, and hermeneutic approaches. The themes raised are also quite varied, ranging from the discourse of *Isrā'īliyyāt*, anthropomorphism interpretation, household conflict resolution, to the reconstruction of the meaning of adultery and polytheism in the perspective of modern linguistic theory. This diversity shows that research at the

master's level has been more specific and analytical, but there are still some criticisms that need to be raised.

Analysis of the list of student theses and thesis shows that research at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang is dominated by "Living Qur'an" and "Thematic Interpretation" studies. Living Qur'an studies focus on the implementation of Qur'anic values in social practices, such as the recitation of certain surahs in community traditions, Qur'an-based medical practices, and ecology from a Qur'anic perspective. Meanwhile, research in the field of "Thematic Interpretation" addresses contemporary issues such as peace, social justice, and morality from a Qur'anic perspective. In addition, other research includes comparative studies between the thoughts of classical and modern mufasssirs, as well as contextual analysis of Qur'anic verses with a hermeneutic approach and historical studies of Qur'anic understanding. Research management at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang has shown success in directing student research on tafsir and thematic Qur'anic studies. Going forward, the institution can increase research collaboration with other universities, expand access to international research resources, and encourage more scientific publications in reputable journals. Thus, tafsir studies at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang can continue to grow and contribute more broadly to Islamic academic studies.

Research Management Development Direction of Both Islamic Universities in Amin Abdullah's Perspective

Within Amin Abdullah's framework, the direction of Qur'anic research needs to be supported by epistemological criticism of the dominance of textual-literal reasoning (*bayâni*) that has long dominated Islamic studies (Abdullah 2016) . This dominance has led to stagnation, a passive mindset, and the closure of spaces for dialogue and methodological renewal (Abdullah 2017) . For this reason, Amin Abdullah emphasizes the need for Qur'anic research based on epistemological openness, an interconnective approach, historical awareness, and a commitment to social transformation (Muhammad Amin Abdullah 2020) . These values are formulated into eight key codes (see Table 1) that can serve as a direction for the management and development of Qur'anic research in Islamic higher education institutions (Alamin et al., 2024).

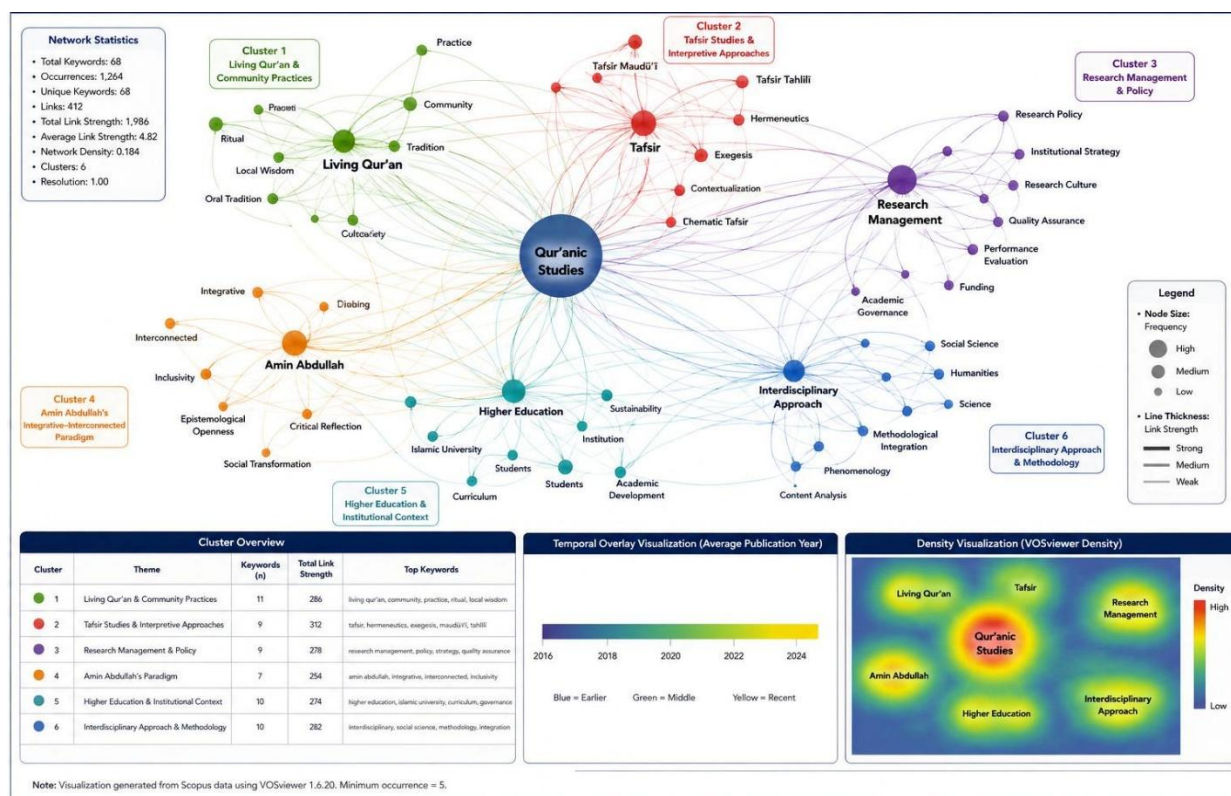


Figure 1. Enhanced Keyword Co-occurrence Network (VOSviewer Style)

Figure 1 maps the intellectual structure of Qur'anic Studies through six major thematic clusters. The central position and relatively large node of Qur'anic Studies indicate its role as a connecting field among tafsir, Living Qur'an, higher education, research management, and interdisciplinary methodology. This configuration reflects the broader transformation of Qur'anic Studies from a predominantly text-centered field toward a more diverse field concerned with interpretation, reception, social practice, methodology, and institutional knowledge production (Rafiq, 2021; Aji, Hilmi, & Rahman, 2021; Musliadi, 2014; Abdullah, 2006; Izudin, 2015). The network therefore suggests that contemporary Qur'anic Studies is increasingly constituted through interactions between textual traditions, empirical realities, methodological developments, and institutional contexts.

The first two clusters reveal a continuing relationship between classical interpretive traditions and the expansion of Qur'anic Studies into lived religious realities. The Tafsir Studies and Interpretive Approaches cluster is organized around tafsir, hermeneutics, exegesis, contextualization, tafsir maudhu'i, and tafsir tahlili, indicating the persistence of textual and interpretive scholarship. In parallel, the Living Qur'an cluster connects the Qur'an with community, practice, ritual, tradition, local wisdom, and oral tradition. This development corresponds with scholarship that conceptualizes Living Qur'an as an expansion of the research object from the Qur'anic text itself toward the ways scripture functions, is experienced, and is reproduced within Muslim communities (Rafiq, 2021; Aji, Hilmi, & Rahman, 2021; Annas, Saputra, & Said, 2024). Importantly, the emergence of Living Qur'an does not simply represent the addition of a new topic; it also raises methodological questions concerning observation, interviews, documentation, phenomenology, and the relationship between normative scripture and empirical social realities.

The emergence of the Research Management and Policy and Higher Education and Institutional Context clusters introduces another dimension: Qur'anic Studies is increasingly embedded within the institutional conditions of knowledge production. Keywords such as research culture, research policy,

institutional strategy, quality assurance, funding, academic governance, curriculum, and academic development indicate that the development of Qur'anic scholarship is also shaped by how Islamic higher education organizes research capacity and academic production. This perspective resonates with Amin Abdullah's critique of the separation between religious and scientific knowledge and his proposal for an integrative-interconnected epistemology that connects religious studies with the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences (Abdullah, 2006; Musliadi, 2014; Waston, 2016; Yulanda, 2020). Thus, research management should not be treated merely as an administrative dimension external to Qur'anic Studies; it constitutes part of the institutional environment through which particular forms of knowledge become possible.

The Amin Abdullah's Integrative-Interconnected Paradigm cluster provides an important epistemological bridge within this network. Its association with integrative, interconnected, epistemological openness, critical reflection, inclusivity, and social transformation suggests that the development of Qur'anic Studies is increasingly discussed in relation to the problem of disciplinary fragmentation. Abdullah's framework seeks to overcome the dichotomy between normative religious knowledge and historical-empirical knowledge by establishing dialogue among ḥadārat al-naṣṣ, ḥadārat al-'ilm, and ḥadārat al-falsafah (Abdullah, 2006; Musliadi, 2014; Izudin, 2015; Yulanda, 2020; Ulviana, 2024). In this framework, interdisciplinarity is therefore not simply the simultaneous use of several disciplines, but a process through which different epistemological perspectives interact in constructing knowledge.

The sixth cluster, Interdisciplinary Approach and Methodology, strengthens this interpretation by linking Qur'anic Studies with the social sciences, humanities, science, phenomenology, content analysis, and methodological integration. Recent methodological discussions similarly emphasize that interdisciplinary Qur'anic research requires more than importing concepts from other fields; differences in epistemology, language, and research procedures must also be negotiated (Darzi, 2023; Muttaqin, 2025)(Mually & Abdulghani, 2024). The methodological development of Living Qur'an provides a concrete example, as research in this field increasingly employs observation, interviews, documentation, and social-scientific approaches alongside Qur'anic studies (Aji, Hilmi, & Rahman, 2021; Rafiq, 2021). The network therefore indicates that interdisciplinarity has become an important direction in the methodological development of contemporary Qur'anic scholarship.

Taken together, the network reveals a significant pattern: the thematic diversification of Qur'anic Studies is occurring alongside, but not necessarily at the same pace as, its epistemological and methodological transformation. The emergence of Living Qur'an, contextual interpretation, interdisciplinary methodology, and research management expands the field beyond conventional textual scholarship, yet the presence of these themes does not automatically constitute an epistemological transformation. Rafiq (2021), for example, explicitly notes that Living Qur'an still requires stronger epistemological and methodological infrastructure, while research on interdisciplinary Qur'anic studies continues to emphasize the difficulty of negotiating different epistemological traditions (Rafiq, 2021; Darzi, 2023; Aji, Hilmi, & Rahman, 2021). From Amin Abdullah's perspective, the deeper challenge is therefore not simply to diversify research topics or borrow methods from other disciplines, but to establish sustained epistemological interaction between Qur'anic texts, Islamic intellectual traditions, scientific knowledge, social realities, and academic institutions (Abdullah, 2006; Musliadi, 2014; Izudin, 2015; Waston, 2016).

Amin Abdullah proposes that Qur'anic research should be built on the value of epistemological openness. In his view, Islamic epistemology should not be based solely on one source of knowledge but should encompass the integration of revelation, reason, spiritual experience, and empirical science (Abdullah 2001) . Therefore, the interconnective approach is an important value in the development of

tafsir. The Qur'an must be read not only through the lens of classical religion, but also involving disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, linguistics, and science (Anam et al., 2024). In this way, understanding of the verses of the Qur'an becomes richer, more contextual, and more solution-oriented towards contemporary issues.

Amin Abdullah's criticism of the dominance of bayani reasoning also touches on the social aspects of Islamic studies. When religious understanding is overly constrained by texts and the authority of the salaf, space for dialogue and differing interpretations becomes closed. In such conditions, tafsir often becomes a tool for labeling, judging, and even takfir against fellow Muslims who hold different views (Abdullah 2016). Therefore, the value of inclusivity is very important in Qur'anic research. Interpretation is not a final doctrine, but a dynamic process that is open to criticism, differences, and transformation. Interpretation should bridge differences, not reinforce them as dividing lines.

Furthermore, Qur'anic research must be built on the awareness that the sacred text did not descend into a vacuum. It exists within a specific historical context and therefore must be read with a strong sense of historical awareness (). Interpretation that freezes meaning in a particular era without considering social and cultural developments will render the Qur'an's message lifeless (). In this regard, Amin Abdullah proposes that the authority of the text must be complemented by the authority of the context. A good interpretation is one that lives alongside humanity, responds to the issues of its time, and serves as a contextual ethical guide.

One of the major challenges in Qur'anic research, according to Amin Abdullah, is the anti-critical attitude that has become a "habit of mind" in Muslim society. This attitude fosters fear of doubt and views inquiry or investigation as a threat to belief (M. A. Abdullah, 2006; M. A. Abdullah & Abdurahman, 2006). However, in a healthy scientific tradition, doubt is actually the path to deeper understanding. Therefore, critical and reflective values need to be re-cultivated in tafsir studies. Researchers should not merely repeat old interpretations, but must be able to reread, question, and construct new understandings that are more relevant (Saeed, 2006). Amid increasingly complex global and local challenges, ranging from ecological crises, poverty, intolerance, to technology that is transforming humanity, Amin Abdullah emphasizes the importance of making Qur'anic research an instrument of social transformation. The verses of the Qur'an should be read as inspiration for change, not merely as a source of normative arguments detached from the realities of people's lives. The transformative values in Qur'anic research demand a commitment to justice, advocacy for the oppressed, and dedication to societal improvement (M. Abdullah et al., 2025).

In an increasingly pluralistic world, Qur'anic research is also required to develop values of dialogue and tolerance. Exegesis must serve as a bridge between faith communities, not a dividing wall (Boyle, 2004). In Amin Abdullah's thinking, interfaith dialogue is not only a matter of ethics but also epistemology, that is, how we produce religious knowledge. Apologetic and exclusive interpretations will not be able to build bridges of understanding. On the contrary, interpretations that are open to diversity and respect other religious narratives will strengthen Islam's position as a religion that brings mercy to all.

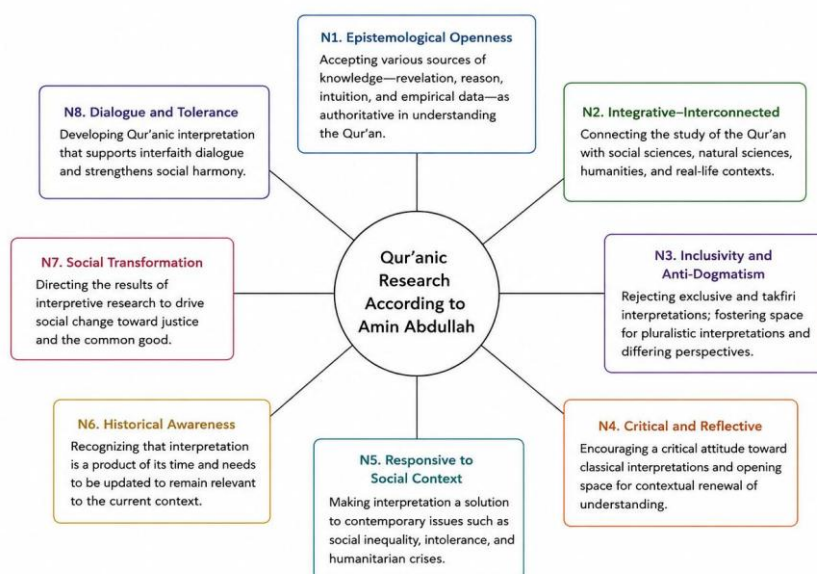
Ultimately, according to Amin Abdullah, Qur'anic research must be grounded in the ethics of knowledge: intellectual honesty, epistemological humility, and moral responsibility toward humanity. The Qur'an as revelation is unchanging, but human understanding of it must always be renewed so that it remains contextual, functional, and capable of being a light in the darkness of the times. By opening space for pluralistic approaches and interdisciplinary engagement, Qur'anic research will be able to become a living, dynamic force that addresses contemporary challenges without losing its roots in the noble Islamic tradition. (M. A. Abdullah, 2002, 2016).

Table 5. *Table of values in Qur'anic research according to Amin Abdullah*

Code	Value Name	Short Description
N1	Epistemological Openness	Accepting various sources of knowledge such as revelation, reason, intuition, and empirical data as authoritative sources in understanding the Qur'an.
N2	Integrative-Interconnected	Connecting the study of the Qur'an with social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, and real-life contexts.
N3	Inclusivity and Anti-Dogmatism	Rejecting exclusive and takfiri interpretations; fostering space for pluralistic interpretations and differing perspectives.
N4	Critical and Reflective	Encouraging a critical attitude toward classical interpretations and opening space for contextual renewal of understanding.
N5	Responsive to Social Context	Making interpretation a solution to contemporary issues such as social inequality, intolerance, and humanitarian crises.
N6	Historical Awareness	Recognizing that interpretation is a product of its time and needs to be updated to remain relevant to the current context.
N7	Social Transformation	Directing the results of interpretive research to drive social change toward justice and the common good.
N8	Dialogue and Tolerance	Developing Qur'anic interpretation that supports interfaith dialogue and strengthens social harmony.

Based on an analysis of research data from theses by students of the Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis Program (IAT) at UIN Raden Intan Lampung and UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, within the framework of Qur'anic research values according to Amin Abdullah's integrative-interconnected perspective, it can be concluded that there is significant compatibility, however, there are limitations in methodological depth and epistemological openness. The dominant research on the Living Qur'an theme demonstrates alignment with the value of responsiveness to social reality, as articulated by Amin Abdullah in "(Rafiq, 2022) . Studies such as the management of orphan donations, alternative medicine, or traditional marriage practices reflect efforts to connect sacred texts with contemporary social dynamics. This aligns with the spirit of social transformation, a key value in Amin Abdullah's tafsir research, as it grounds Qur'anic verses in the context of daily life(M. A. Abdullah, 2001) . Additionally, themes such as ecology, peace, and the failures of life indicate a shift toward contextual interpretation, reflecting historical awareness and engagement with the current challenges faced by the Muslim community.

Diagram 1. Values in Qur'anic Research According to Amin Abdullah



However, most of the research is descriptive and does not yet lead to critical-reflective thinking as required in Amin Abdullah's framework (M. A. Abdullah, 2006). Some thesis topics merely describe social practices associated with certain verses, without conducting an in-depth reflection on the validity of the interpretation, differences of opinion among scholars, or a historical reading of the meaning of the verse. This indicates that a habitus of critical and reflective thinking that avoids dogmatism in understanding texts has not yet been established. In fact, values such as anti-dogmatism and epistemological inclusion require research that is open to plurality of meaning and not fixated on a single school of thought (Muhammad Amin Abdullah 2020).

Some theses using thematic exegesis and comparative exegesis methods have begun to show a direction toward openness to plurality of understanding, particularly in comparing classical and modern exegesis. For example, studies comparing Tafsir Al-Azhar and Ibn Kathir, or between Wahbah Az-Zuhaili and Muhammad Syahrur, can be read as an effort to build epistemological openness. However, this effort needs to be deepened by examining the historical background of the mufassir and understanding the epistemological approaches they use. Without an approach based on the philosophy of science and theoretical reflection, such studies remain limited to formal comparisons and fail to touch upon the more substantive realm of the philosophy of exegesis, as emphasized by Amin Abdullah (Abdullah 2001, 2014; M. Amin Abdullah 2020; Abdullah and Abdurahman 2006).

The linguistic approach, as applied in the analysis of anthropomorphism, can serve as an initial gateway to interdisciplinary research, but it remains insufficient from a methodological standpoint (M. Amin Abdullah 2020). This indicates the potential for developing integrative-interconnective values, namely combining linguistics, hermeneutics, and anthropology in reading the Qur'an, but systematic encouragement from institutions is needed to strengthen students' methodological capacity (Ubaidila & Sulaeman, 2025). A fundamental weakness that still needs attention is the suboptimal internalization of ethical values and dialogical-tolerant values (Abdullah 2016). For example, there is little research exploring issues of religious pluralism, the relationship between Islam and non-Muslims, or Islamic perspectives on human rights and freedom of thought. These issues are crucial in promoting an open attitude and building a tolerant and dialogical interpretation of the Qur'an, as envisioned by Amin Abdullah in facing global challenges.

In general, the research management at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang has shown a direction consistent with the epistemological renewal proposed by Amin Abdullah, particularly in promoting social relevance, engagement with contemporary issues, and contextual themes. However, further strengthening is needed in methodological, interdisciplinary, and critical reflection aspects to ensure that such research is not merely applied but also contributes to the development of an integrative, dynamic, and open-minded science of exegesis that embraces epistemological diversity. By strengthening these dimensions, Qur'anic exegesis studies at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang have the potential to become a concrete representation of the vision of inclusive and progressive Qur'anic research within the framework of Amin Abdullah's thought.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the development of Qur'anic Studies at UIN Raden Intan Lampung and UIN Raden Fatah Palembang by mapping its thematic, methodological, and epistemological orientations. The findings reveal three main patterns. First, Qur'anic Studies has increasingly expanded from classical *tafsir* toward contextual interpretation, *Living Qur'an*, and interdisciplinary research, although the two institutions demonstrate different intellectual orientations. Second, thematic diversification has progressed faster than methodological and epistemological transformation, as many studies remain descriptive while critical analysis, interdisciplinary collaboration, and epistemological integration remain limited. Third, viewed through Amin Abdullah's integrative-interconnected paradigm, genuine integration requires sustained dialogue among *ḥaḍārat al-naṣṣ*, *ḥaḍārat al-ʿilm*, and *ḥaḍārat al-falsafah*. The study contributes the concept of "thematic diversification preceding epistemological transformation" to explain this development and suggests that future research should move beyond thematic expansion toward deeper methodological reconstruction, interdisciplinary engagement, and socially relevant knowledge production.

Implications

For Qur'anic Studies programs and academic managers, the findings suggest that research development should not be measured solely by publication productivity or thematic diversity, but also by methodological innovation and epistemological depth. Researchers should be encouraged to formulate interdisciplinary research problems, engage critically with scientific and social knowledge, and strengthen collaboration across disciplines and institutions. For policymakers and higher education institutions, research policies should provide greater support for interdisciplinary networks, researcher capacity building, student involvement, and research addressing contemporary social issues. These efforts are important for transforming the growing thematic diversity of Qur'anic Studies into sustained epistemological development.

Limitations

This study examined only two Qur'anic Studies programs, UIN Raden Intan Lampung and UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, and therefore its findings cannot be generalized to all Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. The analysis primarily focused on thematic and methodological patterns within the available research corpus and did not directly examine researchers' motivations, institutional decision-making, curriculum structures, or research practices. In addition, the study did not employ a longitudinal design to determine whether thematic diversification will eventually lead to deeper epistemological transformation. Future studies should expand the institutional and geographical scope and combine bibliometric analysis with interviews, curriculum analysis, and longitudinal approaches.

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