



Contemporary Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis: A Comparative Epistemological Analysis of Non- Exegetical Works

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the epistemological characteristics, validity, and typologies of Qur'anic interpretations produced by non-mufassir intellectuals in contemporary Indonesia. Recent studies show that the growing involvement of scientists and non-traditional scholars in Qur'anic interpretation has expanded interdisciplinary engagement but also raised concerns regarding interpretive authority and methodological legitimacy. The tension between classical tafsir standards and modern scientific approaches necessitates a critical evaluative framework grounded in Qur'anic hermeneutics. This research employs a qualitative Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to map, evaluate, and synthesize non-tafsir works produced by selected non-mufassir intellectuals. Data were analyzed using comparative and content analysis through the lenses of *ma'na* cum *maghza*, *maqaṣidi* tafsir, and the integration interconnection paradigm. The findings reveal that interpretive validity is primarily determined by scholarly capacity and methodological awareness rather than formal religious status. Second, non-mufassir interpretations fall into five epistemological typologies: apologetic, confirmatory, heuristic, critical, and collaborative-integrative, with varying degrees of credibility. Third, Qur'an science integration is methodologically sound only when grounded in equitable interdisciplinary dialogue, respect for historical meaning, and *maqaṣid*-oriented objectives. This study contributes an evaluative epistemological framework for contemporary tafsir studies and recommends strengthening methodological discipline and academic validation in future interdisciplinary interpretations.

Key Words: *non-mufassir intellectuals, epistemology of tafsir, Qur'an-science integration, interdisciplinary dialogue*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji karakteristik epistemologis, validitas, dan tipologi interpretasi Al-Qur'an yang dihasilkan oleh intelektual non-mufassir di Indonesia kontemporer. Studi terbaru menunjukkan bahwa meningkatnya keterlibatan para ilmuwan dan cendekiawan non-tradisional dalam interpretasi Al-Qur'an telah memperluas keterlibatan interdisipliner tetapi juga menimbulkan kekhawatiran mengenai otoritas interpretatif dan legitimasi metodologis. Ketegangan antara standar tafsir klasik dan pendekatan ilmiah modern memerlukan kerangka evaluatif kritis yang

didasarkan pada hermeneutika Al-Qur'an. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain Systematic Literature Review (SLR) kualitatif untuk memetakan, mengevaluasi, dan mensintesis karya non-tafsir yang dihasilkan oleh intelektual non-mufassir terpilih. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis komparatif dan konten melalui lensa *ma'na* cum *maghza*, *maqaṣidi tafsir*, dan paradigma interkoneksi integrasi. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa validitas interpretatif terutama ditentukan oleh kapasitas ilmiah dan kesadaran metodologis daripada status agama formal. Kedua, interpretasi non-mufassir membentuk tiga tipologi epistemologis: apologetik, konfirmasi, heuristik, kritis, dan integratif kolaboratif, dengan tingkat kredibilitas yang berbeda. Ketiga, integrasi ilmu Al-Qur'an secara metodologis hanya masuk akal jika didasarkan pada dialog interdisipliner yang adil, menghormati makna sejarah, dan tujuan berorientasi *maqaṣid*. Studi ini menyumbangkan kerangka epistemologis evaluatif untuk studi tafsir kontemporer dan merekomendasikan penguatan disiplin metodologis dan validasi akademik dalam interpretasi interdisipliner di masa depan.

Kata Kunci: *Intelektual Non-Mufassir, Epistemologi Tafsir, Integrasi Al-Qur'an-Sains, Dialog Interdisipliner*

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Muslim society, the Qur'an is no longer positioned solely as a normative theological text but also as a source of ethical and intellectual reference in responding to global social change. This transformation is driven by advances in Science and digital technology, as well as the increasing complexity of modern humanitarian problems (Sati et al., 2025; Abbas, 2025; Devidal, 2024). Consequently, the study of the Qur'an has evolved into a cross-disciplinary arena involving academics from the sciences, humanities, and social sciences (Hakim et al., 2025; Jamil et al., 2025). On the one hand, this involvement broadens understanding of the Qur'an, making it more contextual and applicable. However, serious problems arise regarding epistemological legitimacy, interpretive authority, and potential ideological bias in the interpretation of Qur'anic verses (Al-Deek, 2025; Za'bah, B., & Noor, A. Y. M., 2025). This issue is crucial for the broader community because the understanding of the Qur'an not only constitutes an academic discourse but also influences Muslims' religious orientation, social attitudes, and public policies. Therefore, a critical study of the validity of non-Mufasir interpretations is urgently needed to maintain a balance between intellectual openness and the integrity of the Qur'an's teachings.

The main problem facing Muslim society today is the growing tension between the authority of classical interpretation and the expansion of understanding of the Qur'an by non-mufasir actors. The tradition of tafsir has long-established strict methodological rules that place the mufasir as an authoritative figure in interpreting the Qur'an (Rohman, B., 2025; Wibisono, Y., & Roeslan, F., 2025). However, in contemporary reality, the meaning of the Qur'an is no longer monopolized by these circles. Scientists, philosophers, sociologists, and public figures have contributed to Qur'anic discourse through their respective disciplines (Danarta, A. 2022; Qadafy, M. Z., 2025). This condition

gives rise to an epistemological problem: the extent to which such interpretations can be considered valid and scientifically and theologically responsible (Puzio, A., 2025). In the digital public sphere, the boundary between methodological and speculative interpretation is increasingly blurred, making it difficult for people to distinguish credible scientific authorities (Bartsch et al., 2025). This ambiguity has the potential to trigger fragmentation of religious understanding and to generate discourse conflicts, which ultimately require an academic framework capable of objectively explaining and assessing the phenomenon.

Field observations indicate a significant increase in the production of Quranic discourse by non-composers through popular books, scholarly articles, digital lectures, and social media. Interpretations based on Science, philosophy, psychology, and the social sciences are increasingly dominant in contemporary Islamic discourse (Fakhrurrozi et al., 2024; Husni, H., & Hayden, W., 2024; Istajib et al., 2024). Quranic verses are often linked to theories of cosmology, ecology, and global humanitarian issues such as social justice and human rights (Ahmad, S., & Fatima, M., 2025; Rehman, A., 2025). This phenomenon reflects the public's need for an understanding of the Quran that is responsive to modern realities. However, several studies warn of a tendency to force verses to conform to certain scientific paradigms, which can diminish the Quran's normative meaning (Faris, S., 2023; Behjatpour, A. K., & Ahmadibighash, K., 2024). In some cases, the Quran is even used to legitimize temporary scientific claims. This situation demonstrates the tension between constructive intellectual contributions and the risk of epistemological deviation, thus demanding a more serious methodological evaluation of non-composer interpretations.

Previous research has extensively examined Qur'anic interpretation through contextual and interdisciplinary approaches. Recent studies emphasize the importance of integrating text, historical context, and social reality to maintain the relevance of interpretation in changing times (Kerwanto et al., 2024; Burgos et al., 2025; Phillips, M. J., 2023). Furthermore, contemporary studies of the epistemology of interpretation have developed, highlighting the dialectical relationship between classical exegetical traditions and the demands of modernity, including the notion of discursive and contextual interpretation (Kerwanto et al., 2024; Wahyuningsih, W., 2025). Other research also emphasizes the importance of a plurality of scholarly approaches to interpretation as a response to the complexity of social issues (Sarmin, 2023; Beaumont, P., & Coning, C. D., 2022; Sapkota, M., 2025). On the other hand, the genealogical approach to exegesis makes a significant contribution by tracing the continuity of exegetical thought across generations and by examining how the socio-intellectual context influences the emergence of exegetical works (Nur Rohmat et al., 2024; Islam, J. S., 2023). However, the primary focus of these studies remains on exegetes and authoritative exegetical traditions.

The main limitation of previous research is the lack of studies that specifically examine the interpretation of the Quran by non-exegetes from an exegetical epistemological perspective. Interdisciplinary studies generally discuss the relevance and methods of exegesis, but have not systematically reviewed the issues of authority, validity, and mechanisms of meaning production when exegesis is produced by actors outside the exegetical discipline (Danarta, A. 2022; Qadafy, M. Z., 2025). Meanwhile, the genealogical approach emphasizes the continuity of the classical exegetical tradition and tends to limit the space for the emergence of new interpretative models (Harrison, P., 2023; Villas Boas, A., & Candiotti, C., 2025). In fact, contemporary reality shows that the contributions of non-compulsory scholars are an inevitable phenomenon (Zhang, Y., Chu, Z., & Song, D., 2022; Zorzetto, S., 2025). This analytical gap constitutes this study's research gap: the absence of an evaluative framework capable of fairly assessing non-compulsory interpretations, neither rejecting them *a priori* nor accepting them without methodological critique.

This study offers a novel approach by examining the interpretation of the Quran by non-compulsory scholars through an interdisciplinary epistemological approach. Unlike previous research, this study does not merely assess the correctness or incorrectness of non-compulsory interpretations; instead, it seeks to understand the logic of interpretative production, the sources of knowledge, and the mechanisms of validation used. By introducing the concept of the Non-Compulsory Interpreter (INM), this study builds a new analytical framework for interpreting the contributions of scholars from scientific, social, and philosophical backgrounds to Quranic studies. This approach is state-of-the-art because it connects the three main domains of Qur'anic studies: text, history, and application into a single, comprehensive evaluative framework. This novelty is crucial because it bridges the tension between traditional authority and contemporary needs, while enriching the treasury of Qur'anic studies without sacrificing the methodological principles of exegesis.

Based on this description, this research aims to answer the main question: What are the characteristics, epistemology, and validity of Qur'anic interpretations produced by non-composers? This research argues that non-composer interpretations cannot be rejected outright, provided they adhere to certain methodological principles and do not conflict with the universal values of the Qur'an. Through comparative and genealogical analysis, this research argues that an interdisciplinary approach can provide a middle ground between the rigidity of classical exegesis and interpretive relativism. The main contribution of this research is the development of an evaluative framework that allows for dialogue between the production of

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design. This design was chosen based on the research objective, which focuses on mapping, critical evaluation, and conceptual synthesis of Quranic interpretations produced by non-composer intellectuals through non-composer works (KnT). SLR was chosen because it provides a comprehensive, structured overview of the current state of knowledge in a field of study in a transparent and replicable manner (Cabrera et al., 2023; O'Kane et al., 2023). In contemporary exegesis studies, SLR is relevant for identifying epistemological patterns, methodological characteristics, and trends in validity across non-composer interpretations across various academic sources. This approach also allows for systematic comparative analysis across interpretation paradigms and disciplines (Diwanji, V. S., 2023). Therefore, the SLR design is considered most appropriate for addressing research questions related to legitimacy, typology, and the construction of meaning in non-composer interpretations scientifically and measurably.

Data were collected through a systematic literature search of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources consisted of non-tafsir (KnT) works written by non-composer intellectuals, namely Agus Mustofa, Agus Purwanto, and Tafsir Salman ITB, selected because they represent the integration of Science in Qur'anic studies. Secondary sources included journal articles indexed in Scopus and Sinta, academic books, and scientific proceedings that discuss contemporary interpretation, the epistemology of interpretation, and interdisciplinary approaches. The search was conducted in Google Scholar, Scopus, and Garuda using keywords such as non-composer interpretation, Qur'anic multidisciplinary studies, and the epistemology of interpretation. The selection process followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) principles of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion to ensure the analyzed literature was sufficiently relevant and of high academic quality (Lawal et al., 2025; Mohd Ashril et al., 2025).

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively and interpretively, combining content and comparative studies. Non-interpretive works (NTAs) were analyzed to identify the interpretive characteristics, epistemological sources, and patterns of scientific integration employed by each non-composer. The analysis was then conducted using three primary evaluative frameworks: the Ma'na-cum-Maghza approach (Sahiron Syamsuddin), the Maqasidi Tafsir (Abdul Mustaqim), and the Integration-Interconnection paradigm (M. Amin Abdullah). These three frameworks served as analytical lenses to assess the validity, methodological coherence, and relevance of the interpretations (Schreiber et al., 2024; Lim, W. M., 2024). The analysis was iterative and reflective, comparing findings across works

to produce a comprehensive, conceptual typology of non-composer interpretations (Cather, D. P., 2023).

To ensure data validity, this study employed several qualitative validation strategies, although these were not intended to yield statistical generalizations. First, source triangulation, comparing NTAs with authoritative tafsir literature and contemporary academic studies, was employed. Second, an audit trail, which systematically records all stages of literature search, selection, and analysis to ensure transparency and traceability of the research process (O'Sullivan et al., 2025 Afadzinu et al., 2024). Third, conceptual peer debriefing, which tests the consistency of interpretations with established theories and interpretation paradigms. This approach ensures that the analysis results are not merely subjective but can be academically and methodologically justified within the tradition of literature-based qualitative research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and critically discusses the study's main findings on the epistemological validity of Qur'anic interpretation produced by non-mufassir intellectuals, and the conditions under which Qur'an-science integration can be considered methodologically sound. Drawing on a systematic analysis of non-tafsir works (KnT) by Agus Mustofa, Agus Purwanto, and Tafsir Salman, the discussion is structured around three interrelated themes: the role of scholarly capacity and methodological awareness in determining interpretive validity, the emergence of distinct typologies of non-mufassir interpretation with varying levels of epistemological robustness, and the criteria for valid integration between revelation and modern Science through equitable interdisciplinary dialogue. By situating empirical findings within established theoretical frameworks such as classical '*ulum al-Qur'an*', the *ma'na cum maghza* approach, *maqaṣidi tafsir*, and integration-interconnection paradigms this section not only evaluates the strengths and limitations of each interpretive model but also demonstrates how methodological discipline and academic validation function as decisive factors in sustaining credible contemporary Qur'anic interpretation.

The Validity of Qur'anic Interpretation Is Strongly Determined by the Interpreter's Scholarly Capacity and Methodological Awareness

This study finds that the validity of Qur'anic interpretation cannot be reduced to religious enthusiasm or the sophistication of scientific approaches alone, but is fundamentally determined by the interpreter's scholarly capacity and methodological awareness. This finding aligns with the classical consensus in '*ulum al-Qur'an*', which holds that mastery of Arabic, Qur'anic sciences, Hadith, and moral integrity constitutes the foundation of a mufassir's authority (Osman, R., & Hassan, M., 2022; Rizki et al., 2024). However, the findings indicate that, in the contemporary context, these criteria face severe challenges due to the

emergence of interpretations produced by non-mufassir intellectuals with expertise in other fields, particularly Science. The cases of Agus Mustofa, Agus Purwanto, and Tafsir Salman demonstrate that scientific sophistication without methodological balance tends to generate epistemological problems. This supports Bora, A. (2025) argument that modern interpretation requires awareness of the “historical distance” between text and reader, rather than mere intellectual audacity. Thus, the validity of tafsir is not a matter of who is most innovative, but of who is most methodologically responsible.

The findings show that limitations in linguistic competence and mastery of ‘ulum al-Qur’ān directly contribute to tendencies toward subjective bias in interpretation. In Agus Mustofa’s works, for instance, the absence of linguistic analysis and the marginalization of Hadith lead interpretation toward rational speculation that is difficult to verify. This finding affirms Faris S. (2023) critique that interpretations which leap directly to modern relevance without first establishing historical meaning (*ma’na*) risk turning the Qur’ān into a mere instrument for legitimizing external ideas. In contrast, Agus Purwanto and Tafsir Salman display stronger methodological awareness by conducting preliminary analyses of textual context. However, both still face limitations in the depth of Arabic linguistic analysis and in their engagement with classical tafsir sources. This reinforces Sabnis, S. V., & Wolgemuth, J. R. (2024) thesis that interpretive validity is not dichotomous (valid or invalid), but exists along a spectrum of methodological quality. The more complete the scholarly capacity and the more disciplined the method employed, the greater the degree of interpretive credibility.

This study also finds that methodological awareness is the primary factor distinguishing productive innovation from problematic innovation. Methodological awareness here refers to the interpreter’s ability to position the Qur’ānic text, the tafsir tradition, and modern Science within an equal and dialogical relationship. Agus Mustofa tends to treat Science as the sole arbiter of textual meaning, leading to a reductive form of integration. This finding resonates with Senel, B. (2025) critique of monological integration models, in which one discipline dominates others. By contrast, Tafsir Salman seeks to foster interdisciplinary dialogue through collective discussion and cross-expert confirmation. However, it remains weak in terms of the academic transparency of its sources. Agus Purwanto occupies an intermediate position, employing a more heuristic-critical approach that is relatively open to correction. Accordingly, this study emphasizes that methodological awareness is not merely about adhering to technical rules of tafsir, but also about the ethical management of epistemic authority.

Another salient finding of this study concerns the importance of validation mechanisms in safeguarding the credibility of contemporary tafsir. Interpretations that do not undergo testing, whether through peer review,

interdisciplinary confirmation, or openness to falsification, tend to be apologetic and epistemologically fragile. This finding is consistent with the views of Mao, M., Siponen, M., & Nathan, M. (2023) and Popperian falsificationism, which regard testability as a prerequisite for scholarly claims. In the context of Qur'anic studies, this mechanism is most evident in *Tafsir Salman*, which has been openly examined and critiqued in various academic publications since 2017. In contrast, Agus Mustofa's interpretations predominantly circulate within popular readerships and receive minimal rigorous academic scrutiny. This strengthens Zubaidi et al. (2025) argument that contemporary *tafsir* must enter critical academic spaces to avoid falling into a new form of science-based intellectual authoritarianism.

Overall, the findings of this study affirm that the validity of Qur'anic interpretation emerges from a complex interaction between scholarly capacity, methodological awareness, and mechanisms of scientific validation. Interpretations that rely solely on good intentions or scientific sophistication without a foundation in 'ulūm al-Qur'an risk producing reductive meanings and textual manipulation. Conversely, interpretations that strive to maintain a balance between text, context, and reason, even when undertaken by non-mufassirs, have a greater likelihood of being academically acceptable. These findings expand contemporary *tafsir* discourse by demonstrating that the central issue is not merely "who interprets," but rather "how interpretation is conducted." In this sense, the study supports the integrative calls advanced by Bora, A. (2025) and Zubaidi et al. (2025), asserting that the future of Qur'anic studies depends on maintaining methodological rigor while remaining open to interdisciplinary scholarly dialogue.

Table 1. Comparison Research Findings and Theoretical Frameworks in Qur'anic Interpretation

Aspect Examined	Key Theoretical Framework	Theoretical Perspective	Research Findings (Empirical)	Academic Implications
Interpretive Authority	Classical 'Ulūm al-Qur'an (al-Zarkashī; al-Suyūtī)	Interpretive authority belongs to mufassirs with mastery of Arabic, Hadith, and Qur'anic sciences	Non-mufassirs exhibit varying levels of interpretive quality; authority is not absolute but dependent on scholarly capacity and methodology	Interpretive authority is gradational, not dichotomous
Textual Meaning (<i>Ma'na</i>)	<i>Ma'na-cum-Maghza</i> approach (Syamsuddin)	Historical-textual meaning must be established prior to contextualization	Agus Mustofa tends to bypass <i>ma'na</i> ; Purwanto and <i>Tafsir Salman</i> demonstrate greater contextual awareness	Historical consciousness is a minimum requirement for validity
Science-Qur'an Integration	Integration-Interconnection	A dialogical and non-hierarchical	Integration is monological in Agus	Effective integration

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	paradigm (Amin Abdullah)	relationship between religion and Science	Mustofa, partially dialogical in Purwanto, and collective in <i>Tafsir Salman</i>	requires non-reductive dialogue
Purpose of Interpretation	<i>Maqāṣidī Tafsir</i> (Abdul Mustaqim)	Interpretation should be oriented toward universal ethical and humanistic values	KnT often prioritizes scientific verification over ethical-maqāṣidi objectives	Maqāṣid-oriented interpretation strengthens legitimacy
Epistemological Validity	Scientific falsification & peer review	Scholarly claims must remain open to critique and verification	<i>Tafsir Salman</i> shows relative academic validation; Agus Mustofa lacks systematic scholarly scrutiny	Validation mechanisms determine interpretive credibility
Risk of Bias	Critique of modern tafsir (Fazlur Rahman)	Interpretation is vulnerable to bias when external ideologies dominate	Ideological and scientific bias is evident in certain KnT works	Strict methodological control is required
Position of Non-Mufassirs	<i>Thinkers of Qur'anic Sciences</i> (Muhammadi et al.)	Non-mufassirs may contribute within defined scholarly limits	Contributions are acceptable when minimum interpretive principles are observed	Non-mufassirs are conditionally legitimate interpreters

Interpretation by Non-Mufassir Intellectuals Produces Three Typologies with Different Levels of Validity

This study finds that Qur'anic interpretation conducted by non-mufassir intellectuals (INM) in Indonesia does not constitute a homogeneous phenomenon but instead forms three distinct epistemological typologies with varying degrees of validity. Differences in scholarly capacity, methodological awareness, engagement with classical tafsir, and mechanisms of validation shape these typologies. The first typology is an apologetic-confirmatory and speculative model, represented by Agus Mustofa; the second is a heuristic-critical scientific tafsir model, exemplified by Agus Purwanto; and the third is a collaborative-integrative scientific tafsir model, exemplified by *Tafsir Salman*. This classification extends theoretical discussions on contemporary tafsir authority, which emphasize that interpretive legitimacy is no longer determined solely by formal religious credentials but by methodological rigor and epistemic accountability (Bora, A., 2025; Zubaidi et al., 2025). The findings demonstrate that while all three models aim to integrate the Qur'an with modern knowledge, they differ significantly in how they negotiate the relationship between text, reason, and Science. As a result, they form a hierarchy of epistemological quality ranging from speculative and fragile to dialogical and relatively resilient under academic

scrutiny. To provide a clearer picture of the comparison of the characteristics and validity of each non-mufasir intellectual, the following is presented a summary table:

Table 2. Comparison of Non-Expert Intellectual Approaches to Qur'anic Interpretation

Academic & Religious Background		Interpretation Method	Sources & References	Validation Mechanism	Strengths	Weaknesses
Subject / Typology						
Agus Mustafa	Nuclear Engineering, Tasawwuf tradition	Puzzle Method (thematic-subjective, logic-science based)	Primarily Qur'anic verses; Hadith often ignored	Public scrutiny only	Innovative integration of logic and Qur'an; accessible to lay readers	Neglects Hadith; speculative; risks misinterpretation; "materialistic"
Agus Purwanto	Theoretical Physicist, PhD from Hiroshima	Scientific Tafsir (Tafsir Ilmi)	Qur'anic verses (kawniyah); via modern physics data; critique of translations	Confirmation (via contemporary scientific theory; public peer review)	Bridges science and Qur'an; raises intellectual curiosity	Limited Arabic linguistics; less attention to classical tafsir details
Tafsir Salman	Team-based, ITB scientists + limited religious scholars	Heuristic-Critical & Interdisciplinary	Qur'anic verses; 8 classical tafsir sources; asbab nuzul; scientific data	Peer review within team; confirmation with scientific & linguistic experts; public scrutiny	Balanced interdisciplinary respects historical and textual integrity	Limited formal capacity of religious scholars; some inconsistencies in citation

This table confirms that the credibility of interpretation is not determined solely by academic background or scientific ability, but rather by a balance among the integrity of the text, historical understanding, and engagement with empirical data. Integrations that are overly apologetic or confirmatory, as seen in some puzzle methods or scientific interpretations, risk bias and inaccuracies in understanding the text's meaning.

The first typology, the apologetic confirmatory speculative model represented by Agus Mustofa, is characterized by a firm reliance on rational-scientific logic as the primary interpretive lens. Using what he terms the "Puzzle Method," Mustofa assembles thematically related verses and binds them together through scientific reasoning rather than through hadith, classical tafsir, or linguistic analysis. This approach resembles *tafsir maudhu'i* in form but diverges sharply in its analytical foundation, as its connective logic is primarily subjective and positivist. From a theoretical perspective, this model reflects what

Mufid et al. (2023) warned against: the tendency to bypass historical meaning (*ma'na*) and to impose contemporary frameworks directly on the text. The study finds that Mustofa's marginalization of hadith and disregard for scholarly consensus render his interpretations highly vulnerable to bias and theological deviation. Compared with *ululumul Qur'an* standards articulated by al-Zarkashi and al-Suyuti, this model lacks the minimum epistemic safeguards required for interpretive credibility. Consequently, although innovative and popular, it occupies the weakest position in the hierarchy of validity.

The second typology, the heuristic-critical scientific *tafsir* model exemplified by Agus Purwanto, demonstrates a higher level of methodological awareness and epistemic caution. As a theoretical physicist, Purwanto employs *tafsir 'ilmi* to explore correlations between Qur'anic verses and established scientific knowledge, particularly in physics, biology, and cosmology. Unlike the speculative apologetic model, this approach attempts to respect the stability of the Qur'anic text (*tsabit*) while acknowledging the provisional nature of Science (*mutaghayyir*). The findings indicate that Purwanto often begins by contextualizing and thematizing verses before proposing scientific explanations, aligning partially with the double-movement theory of Rahman and the *ma'na* cum *maghza* framework of Zubaidi et al. (2025). However, limitations remain evident in his relatively shallow engagement with Arabic linguistics and classical exegetical debates. Theoretically, critics of *tafsir 'ilmi* caution against *isytiraq* forcing scientific theories onto revelation (Ghani et al., 2024). Nevertheless, compared with Mustofa's model, Purwanto's model exhibits greater heuristic value and openness to correction, placing it at a moderate level of epistemological validity.

The third typology, the collaborative-integrative scientific *tafsir* model, as represented by *Tafsir Salman*, emerges as the most methodologically structured and institutionally grounded of the three. Produced collectively by scientists, engineers, and religious scholars affiliated with Salman Mosque ITB, this model operationalizes integration through teamwork, interdisciplinary dialogue, and internal peer discussion. The study finds that *Tafsir Salman* consciously combines *al-manhaj al-naqli* (classical *tafsir*, *asbab al-nuzul*, and linguistic analysis) with *al-manhaj al-'aqli* (scientific reasoning), reflecting Amin Abdullah's paradigm of integration and interconnection (Faiz, A. A., 2024). From a theoretical standpoint, this model aligns with contemporary calls for dialogical rather than monological integration between religion and Science. However, the findings also reveal epistemic inconsistencies, particularly in citation practices and reliance on non-authoritative scientific sources. Despite these weaknesses, the existence of collective review, cross-disciplinary confirmation, and openness to academic critique significantly enhances its credibility. Consequently, *Tafsir Salman* occupies the highest position in the hierarchy of INM validity identified in this study.

A comparative analysis of the three typologies highlights methodology as the primary determinant of interpretive validity rather than disciplinary background alone. Agus Mustofa's method is predominantly subjective and confirmatory, using Science to justify predetermined conclusions. Agus Purwanto adopts a heuristic critical method that treats Science as an explanatory aid while maintaining interpretive humility. *Tafsir Salman*, meanwhile, institutionalizes methodology through collective procedures and structured stages of analysis. This finding supports Ghani et al.'s (2024) argument that *tafsir* validity operates along a spectrum rather than as a binary of valid versus invalid. Theoretically, it also reinforces Popperian insights that knowledge claims gain strength through testability and methodological transparency (Tennant, 2018). The study demonstrates that as interpretive methods shift from individual intuition toward collaborative, review-based processes, epistemological robustness increases. Thus, innovation in *tafsir* is not inherently problematic; rather, it becomes complicated when detached from disciplined methods and ethical scholarly practices.

Another key distinction among the three typologies lies in their use of sources and academic honesty. The speculative apologetic model frequently marginalizes hadith and selectively cites Qur'anic verses, contradicting the classical principle that the Qur'an is best interpreted through the Qur'an, Sunnah, and early authorities. In contrast, the heuristic-critical model incorporates empirical data and selectively engages classical insights, though sometimes at the expense of linguistic rigor. *Tafsir Salman* demonstrates the broadest range of sources, including classical *tafsir*, modern scientific literature, and interdisciplinary discussions. However, the study finds that inconsistent citation and reliance on popular sources, such as Wikipedia, undermine its scientific claims. These findings resonate with Sholihah and Kahar's (2023) argument that contemporary *tafsir* must adhere to modern standards of academic accountability to avoid replacing traditional authority with a new form of scientific authoritarianism. Thus, source management and transparency emerge as decisive factors in determining epistemic trustworthiness.

Validation mechanisms further differentiate the three typologies and directly affect their resilience under critique. Agus Mustofa's works largely circulate in popular forums with minimal exposure to peer review, rendering them epistemologically fragile. Agus Purwanto's writings, while not formally peer-reviewed as *tafsir*, are subjected to academic discussion due to his standing as a scientist, allowing partial confirmation and critique. *Tafsir Salman* exhibits the most comprehensive validation process, including internal peer discussion, cross-disciplinary confirmation, and extensive post-publication scrutiny in academic journals from 2017 to 2024. This pattern aligns with Tennant's (2018) view of peer review as a key mechanism for quality control and with Popperian falsificationism, which emphasizes openness to refutation as a marker of

scientific maturity. The study thus confirms that interpretive models willing to enter critical academic spaces demonstrate higher epistemic durability than those confined to insular or devotional audiences.

In sum, this study demonstrates that interpretation by non-mufassir intellectuals produces a clear hierarchy of epistemological validity shaped by methodology, source integrity, and validation practices. The apologetic- confirmatory speculative model represents the weakest form due to its subjective logic and resistance to critique. The heuristic-critical scientific tafsir model offers a more balanced and intellectually productive approach, though still constrained by limited mastery of classical tools. The collaborative-integrative model of *Tafsir Salman*, despite notable shortcomings, represents the most promising direction for contemporary Qur'anic studies by operationalizing interdisciplinary dialogue and collective responsibility. These findings extend contemporary tafsir theory by empirically confirming that the central issue is not who interprets the Qur'an, but how interpretation is conducted. As argued by Aji, N. P. (2022), Faiz, A. A. (2024), and Mustaqim (2020), the future of Qur'anic studies depends on maintaining methodological discipline while remaining open to cross-disciplinary engagement.

The Integration of the Qur'an and Science Is Valid Only When Grounded in Equitable Interdisciplinary Dialogue

This study finds that integrating Qur'anic interpretation with modern Science becomes epistemologically problematic when Science is positioned as the sole arbiter of textual meaning. Such an approach reduces revelation to a repository of latent scientific facts awaiting confirmation and risks subordinating the Qur'an to ever-changing scientific paradigms. The findings corroborate long-standing theoretical critiques of monological integration, in which one discipline dominates others (Faiz, A. A., 2024). Instead, valid integration requires an interdisciplinary dialogue that treats revelation, reason, and empirical knowledge as mutually corrective sources of insight. From the perspective of contemporary Qur'anic studies, integration is not a matter of proving the Qur'an "scientifically correct," but of allowing Science to function as a heuristic partner in uncovering broader meanings and ethical orientations embedded in the text. This position aligns with Syamsuddin's (2017) argument that modern interpretation must acknowledge the historical distance between text and reader while resisting the temptation to collapse meaning into contemporary epistemes. Thus, integration becomes an interpretive process rather than a confirmatory exercise.

The research demonstrates that integrations grounded in apologetic- confirmatory logic tend to bypass the historical meaning (*ma'na*) of the Qur'anic text. By directly projecting modern scientific concepts onto verses without reconstructing their original semantic and socio-historical context, such

approaches violate a fundamental principle of hermeneutics. This finding reinforces Mufid et al., (2023) double-movement theory, which holds that interpreters must first recover the text's meaning in its original context before deriving its contemporary significance. In practice, the study shows that neglecting *ma'na* renders integration speculative and methodologically fragile, as evidenced by interpretations that equate Qur'anic cosmological language with specific modern theories. Conversely, heuristic-critical models demonstrate greater epistemic restraint by treating Science as a tool for reflection rather than verification. This confirms Mustaqim's (2020) assertion that interpretive validity lies on a continuum shaped by methodological discipline, not by the novelty or sophistication of the external knowledge employed.

Beyond historical meaning, the study finds that valid integration must be oriented toward *maqasidi* considerations, namely the realization of human welfare (*maslahah*) and the prevention of harm (*mafsadah*). Integrations that focus narrowly on scientific confirmation often fail to produce tangible ethical or social implications, remaining at the level of intellectual admiration. This finding supports the theoretical framework of *Tafsir Maqasidi*, which emphasizes that Qur'anic interpretation should contribute to the protection of core human values such as life, intellect, dignity, and social justice (Mustaqim, 2020). From this perspective, the question is not whether the Qur'an anticipates modern Science, but whether integrated interpretations inspire responsible action and moral awareness. The study reveals that heuristic-critical integrations are better able to generate such outcomes, as they frame scientific insights within broader ethical objectives. This stands in contrast to apologetic models that prioritize doctrinal defense over transformative impact, thereby limiting their relevance to contemporary societal challenges (Ni'am et al., 2025).

A central contribution of this study is its emphasis on equitable interdisciplinary dialogue as the cornerstone of valid integration. Drawing on Amin Abdullah's integration-interconnection paradigm, the findings show that authentic integration requires a "trialogue" between the Qur'anic text (*hadarah al-nass*), philosophical reasoning (*hadarah al-falsafah*), and empirical Science (*hadarah al-'ilm*). When these domains interact symmetrically, each retains its epistemic integrity while remaining open to critique and enrichment from the others (Faiz, A. A., 2024). The study demonstrates that when Science dictates meaning unilaterally, the dialogue collapses into epistemic domination. In contrast, heuristic-critical integrations allow the Qur'an to challenge the philosophical assumptions underlying scientific knowledge, such as reductionism or materialism, while Science refines interpretive imagination. This dialogical balance reflects contemporary hermeneutical insights that knowledge advances not through domination, but through reciprocal critique and cooperation (Faiz, A. A., 2024). To clarify the epistemological distinctions between apologetic and

dialogical models of Qur'an–science integration, the following table summarizes the key analytical dimensions identified in this study.

Table 3. Comparative Analysis of Qur'an-Science Integration Approaches

Evaluation Dimension	Apologetic-Confirmatory Model	Heuristic-Critical Model (Interdisciplinary Dialogue)
Role of Science	Science acts as the sole determinant of textual meaning	Science is positioned equally with the text and philosophical reasoning
Respect for Historical Meaning (Ma'na)	Often ignored or projected onto modern Science	Respected; interpreted within a historical and linguistic context
Maqasid (Welfare-Oriented) Perspective	Focused on intellectual admiration; minimal practical or social impact	Oriented toward universal welfare; practically relevant
Disciplinary Interaction	Science → Text (monologic)	Balanced triad: Text ↔ Philosophy ↔ Science
Academic Validity	Susceptible to speculation and interpretive bias	More credible; open to peer review, confirmation, and falsification
Potential Issues	Risk of reducing the text to mere scientific data	Minimal risk; preserves textual integrity and contemporary relevance

Beyond these conceptual distinctions, the sustainability of dialogical integration depends on robust mechanisms of academic validation. The findings also highlight the role of validation mechanisms in sustaining equitable integration. Integrative interpretations that undergo interdisciplinary peer discussion, are confirmed by domain experts, and remain open to falsification demonstrate greater epistemic resilience. This aligns with Tennant's (2018) view that peer review functions as a key mechanism of quality control and with Popperian falsificationism, which regards openness to refutation as a marker of intellectual maturity. The study shows that heuristic-critical models are more willing to revise or abandon claims when scientific data change, thereby avoiding the theological risk of tying revelation to provisional theories. Apologetic-confirmatory integrations, by contrast, often resist critique, framing disagreement as opposition to faith. This defensive posture undermines both scientific credibility and theological integrity. Hence, validation is not an external add-on but an intrinsic requirement of responsible Qur'anic-scientific integration.

In conclusion, this study affirms that the integration of the Qur'an and Science is epistemologically sound only when grounded in equitable interdisciplinary dialogue. Valid integration respects the historical meaning of the text, aligns interpretation with maqasidi objectives, and situates Science as a heuristic partner rather than a final judge of meaning. These findings extend contemporary tafsir theory by empirically demonstrating that the failure of

integration lies not in engaging Science per se, but in adopting monological and apologetic epistemologies. As Syamsuddin (2017), Abdullah (2020), and Mustaqim (2020) consistently argue, the future of Qur'anic studies depends on sustaining methodological humility alongside intellectual openness. Integration, therefore, should be understood as a dynamic, dialogical process that preserves the transcendent authority of revelation while engaging critically and constructively with human knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that the validity of Qur'anic interpretation is not determined solely by the interpreter's formal religious status or scientific expertise, but by the degree of scholarly capacity, methodological awareness, and academic validation embedded in the interpretive process. This research demonstrates that interpretations produced by non-mufassir intellectuals form a clear hierarchy of epistemological quality, ranging from apologetic-confirmatory and speculative models to heuristic-critical and collaborative-integrative approaches. The key lesson derived from this finding is that intellectual innovation in Qur'anic studies becomes constructive only when grounded in disciplined methodology, respect for historical meaning (*ma'na*), *maqaṣid*-oriented objectives, and openness to interdisciplinary dialogue. Integrating the Qur'an and Science is epistemologically sound, not as a project of scientific confirmation, but as a dialogical process that positions revelation, reason, and empirical knowledge as mutually corrective. This insight reinforces the ethical responsibility of contemporary interpreters to balance intellectual creativity with methodological humility in order to preserve the integrity and transformative potential of the Qur'an.

In terms of scholarly contribution, this study offers a significant advancement in contemporary *tafsir* studies by developing an evaluative epistemological framework for assessing interpretations produced by non-mufassir intellectuals. By introducing the concept of the Non-Mufassir Intellectual (INM) and systematically mapping three distinct interpretive typologies, this research bridges the gap between classical *tafsir* authority and modern interdisciplinary engagement. It contributes theoretically by operationalizing major contemporary hermeneutical frameworks, *ma'na* cum *maghza*, *maqaṣidi tafsir*, and integration and interconnection within a single analytical model, and empirically by demonstrating how methodological rigor and validation mechanisms determine interpretive credibility. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on literature-based qualitative analysis and its focus on selected Indonesian cases, which restricts broader generalization. Future research may expand this framework through comparative studies across Muslim societies, empirical analyses of audience reception, or deeper linguistic examinations of non-mufassir interpretations. Such studies would further refine

the epistemological boundaries of legitimate interpretation while strengthening dialogue between Qur'anic studies and contemporary knowledge production.

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