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AL-RAHMAH: Journal Of Scholarly Studies In Islamic Education, Islamic Studies, And
Multidisciplinary Research/ e-ISSN: 2808-2214

Philosophy of Science and the Reconstruction of Contemporary Qur'anic Interpretation: Integrating Epistemology, Methodology, and Qur'anic Contextualization

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Abstract

Contemporary society faces increasingly complex problems, including large-scale deforestation, landslides, climate change, environmental degradation, technological disruption, and humanitarian crises, many of which were not encountered in the same form by classical Muslim scholars. These challenges raise an epistemological question concerning the capacity of contemporary Qur'anic interpretation to produce relevant and transformative responses. This study examines the integration of philosophy of science as a foundation for reconstructing contemporary tafsir by connecting epistemology, methodology, and contextualization. Employing qualitative library research with a philosophical-analytical approach, the study critically examines classical and contemporary tafsir discourse alongside developments in philosophy of science and contextual Qur'anic hermeneutics. The findings indicate that the problem is not the inadequacy of classical tafsir, but the tendency to reproduce inherited interpretations without sufficiently transforming their ethical principles into responses to emerging realities. Such a tendency contrasts with the intellectual productivity of classical scholars, who actively engaged with the scientific, social, political, and intellectual challenges of their own contexts. The study argues that contemporary tafsir requires an epistemological reconstruction that integrates revelation, reason, empirical knowledge, interdisciplinary inquiry, and contextual awareness. In this framework, Qur'anic interpretation should not merely explain existing texts but generate ethical and intellectual responses to new problems, including ecological disasters and destructive exploitation of natural resources. The novelty of this study lies in proposing philosophy of science as a foundation for transforming tafsir from a predominantly reproductive tradition into a productive, contextual, interdisciplinary, and problem-oriented intellectual enterprise.

Keywords: Philosophy of Science; Contemporary Tafsir; Qur'anic Hermeneutics; Ecological Crisis; Epistemological Reconstruction

Al- Rahmah: Journal Of Scholarly Studies In Islamic Education, Islamic Studies, And
Multidisciplinary Research

Vol 6 No 1 Juli 2026

ISSN: 2808-2214

Abstrak

Masyarakat kontemporer menghadapi persoalan yang semakin kompleks, seperti penebangan hutan secara besar-besaran, bencana longsor, perubahan iklim, kerusakan lingkungan, disrupsi teknologi, dan berbagai krisis kemanusiaan yang tidak ditemukan dalam bentuk yang sama oleh ulama klasik. Persoalan tersebut melahirkan pertanyaan epistemologis mengenai kemampuan tafsir Al-Qur'an kontemporer dalam menghasilkan respons yang relevan dan transformatif. Penelitian ini mengkaji integrasi filsafat ilmu sebagai landasan rekonstruksi tafsir kontemporer melalui keterpaduan epistemologi, metodologi, dan kontekstualisasi. Penelitian menggunakan *library research* dengan pendekatan filosofis-analitis melalui telaah kritis terhadap khazanah tafsir klasik dan kontemporer, filsafat ilmu, serta hermeneutika kontekstual Al-Qur'an. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa persoalannya bukan terletak pada ketidakcukupan tafsir klasik, melainkan pada kecenderungan mereproduksi penafsiran warisan tanpa mentransformasikan prinsip-prinsip etikanya secara memadai ke dalam respons terhadap realitas baru. Kecenderungan tersebut berbeda dengan produktivitas intelektual ulama klasik yang aktif merespons persoalan ilmiah, sosial, politik, dan intelektual pada zamannya. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa tafsir kontemporer membutuhkan rekonstruksi epistemologis yang mengintegrasikan wahyu, akal, pengetahuan empiris, pendekatan interdisipliner, dan kesadaran kontekstual. Dalam kerangka tersebut, tafsir tidak cukup hanya menjelaskan teks yang telah ada, tetapi harus mampu melahirkan respons etis dan intelektual terhadap persoalan baru, termasuk bencana ekologis dan eksploitasi sumber daya alam yang destruktif. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada pengajuan filsafat ilmu sebagai fondasi transformasi tafsir dari tradisi yang cenderung reproduktif menuju praksis intelektual yang produktif, kontekstual, interdisipliner, dan berorientasi pada problem.

Kata Kunci: Filsafat Ilmu; Tafsir Kontemporer; Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an; Krisis Ekologi; Rekonstruksi Epistemologi

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an provides enduring guidance, while human realities continuously change. Contemporary society faces problems that did not exist in the same form during the classical period, including large-scale deforestation, environmental degradation, landslides, climate change, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and new humanitarian crises. These developments raise a fundamental question for Qur'anic studies: how can Qur'anic interpretation



remain relevant and productive when the realities requiring ethical guidance continually change? The issue is not the relevance of the Qur'an itself, but whether existing interpretive approaches possess sufficient epistemological and methodological capacity to transform its normative guidance into meaningful responses to emerging realities.

This problem is particularly evident in ecological issues. Qur'anic concepts such as *fasād*, *mīzān*, *khilāfah*, and *amānah* contain significant ethical implications for human relations with nature, yet their interpretation is often confined to lexical, theological, or general moral explanations without sufficient engagement with contemporary knowledge concerning deforestation, ecological degradation, climate change, and disaster risk. Consequently, the challenge is not the absence of ecological principles in the Qur'an but the limited capacity of tafsir to translate these principles into systematic responses to contemporary ecological problems. The persistence of reproductive interpretation also raises a broader epistemological concern: classical tafsir, which was historically produced through active engagement with the intellectual circumstances of its time, can become treated as a final interpretive product rather than as an intellectual tradition that should itself remain productive.

The hesitation to produce new interpretations is also related to the strong methodological requirements associated with *ijtihād* and Qur'anic interpretation. Such requirements are necessary to prevent arbitrary interpretation, but excessive caution may become counterproductive when interpretive authority is perceived as accessible only to an almost idealized and exceptionally qualified interpreter. The issue should not be reduced to the simplistic claim that "the gate of *ijtihād* was closed"; rather, the critical question is whether contemporary interpretive culture has created an epistemological environment in which the fear of methodological error discourages responsible intellectual production. The alternative is neither unrestricted relativism nor rigid reproduction, but a rigorous methodology capable of preserving the normative authority of revelation while engaging changing realities.

Modern and contemporary Muslim thinkers provide important resources for such reconstruction. Muhammad Abduh emphasized rationality and social relevance in Qur'anic interpretation (Adam, 2023). Fazlur Rahman developed the *double movement*, connecting the historical context of revelation with general moral principles and their application to contemporary circumstances (Rahman,

1982). Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd emphasized the historical and communicative dimensions of the Qur'anic text (Zayd, 2005, 2014), while al-Jabiri critically examined the epistemological structures of Arab-Islamic reason (al-Jabiri, 1990, 2014; Amin, 2025). Seyyed Hossein Nasr connected ecological degradation with the spiritual and metaphysical crisis of modernity (Nasr, 2003), and Hasan Hanafi emphasized the reconstruction of Islamic heritage in relation to contemporary reality (Hanafi, 1980, 1991, 1992). These thinkers collectively demonstrate that interpretive renewal does not require abandoning revelation; rather, it requires reconsidering how revelation, reason, history, knowledge, and reality interact in the production of meaning.

Previous research provides important evidence for the historical dynamism of tafsir but also reveals the space for further development. Hameed and Nadeem (2023) trace the historical development of interpretive methods and demonstrate the evolution of Qur'anic interpretation across different intellectual contexts. Their contribution establishes the historical dynamism of tafsir, but the study remains primarily descriptive and does not formulate an epistemological framework for contemporary knowledge production. Rozi (2019) similarly analyzes the characteristics of classical tafsir and contributes to understanding its historical structure, yet does not extend this analysis toward the reconstruction of contemporary interpretive epistemology. Ali (2018) offers a broader review of classical and modern tafsir trends and identifies the growing importance of modern tafasir in responding to contemporary Islamic thought. However, his study primarily maps interpretive trends rather than explaining the philosophical foundations that should regulate productive interpretive transformation.

Other studies examine methodological innovation within classical tafsir. Saleh (2008) demonstrates how al-Biqā'ī defended the use of biblical materials in Qur'anic interpretation, revealing that classical tafsir could engage critically with knowledge outside its immediate interpretive tradition. Kelly (2024) identifies a significant methodological transformation in the use of *ḥadīth* citation in al-Farrā's *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, demonstrating that even early Qur'anic interpretation underwent methodological change. Marlinda et al. (2025) examine the methodology of al-Khāzin's tafsir and further clarify the diversity of classical interpretive practices. These studies are important because they challenge the assumption that classical tafsir was intellectually static. Nevertheless, they primarily reconstruct historical or individual methodological developments and do not transform those findings into a systematic epistemological model for contemporary tafsir.

A further group of studies demonstrates the application of tafsir to contemporary problems. Khan compares *āyāt al-aḥkām* in classical tafsir with their application in contemporary contexts, demonstrating the continuing relevance of inherited interpretations. Alfani et al. (2025) examine gender equality through classical and modern tafsir and illustrate how interpretive differences can emerge when Qur'anic texts are brought into dialogue with contemporary social concerns. These studies confirm the possibility of contextual application, but their focus remains issue-specific. They do not sufficiently address the more fundamental question of how an epistemological framework can guide the production of new interpretations when emerging problems cannot simply be solved through the direct application of existing exegetical conclusions.

Three other studies – Clymer and Oldani (2023), Stoica (2024), and Jonsson (2014) – use the concept of “interpretation” in relation to quantum mechanics, many-worlds theory, and classical tensors. Although these works are not directly concerned with Qur'anic interpretation, they are conceptually relevant in demonstrating that interpretation is itself a fundamental problem of knowledge involving the relationship between theoretical models, evidence, representation, and reality. Their relevance to the present study is therefore philosophical rather than exegetical. They cannot be used as substantive evidence concerning the development of tafsir, but their epistemological concern with interpretation reinforces the importance of examining the philosophical foundations through which interpretive claims become meaningful and valid.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate three important facts. First, tafsir has historically developed through methodological change rather than remaining completely static (Hameed & Mian Saadat Ali Nadeem, 2023; Kelly, 2024; Saleh, 2008). Second, classical and modern interpretations continue to be compared and applied to contemporary issues (Alfani et al., 2025; Ali, 2018; Khan, 2025). Third, methodological studies of individual classical exegetes continue to enrich knowledge of the diversity of the tafsir tradition (Marlinda et al., 2025; Rozi, 2019). Yet these contributions remain fragmented. The literature has discussed the history, methods, trends, and applications of tafsir, but has not sufficiently integrated these dimensions into a philosophy-of-science-based epistemological framework for productive contemporary interpretation.

This constitutes the principal research gap of the present study. The unresolved issue is not simply how tafsir changes, but what epistemological conditions make interpretive change legitimate, what methodological criteria should regulate it, and how tafsir can produce knowledge capable of responding

to unprecedented realities. This gap becomes especially urgent in ecological crises, where issues such as deforestation, environmental degradation, landslides, and climate change require dialogue between Qur'anic ethics and empirical knowledge from ecology, geology, environmental science, disaster studies, and social sciences.

This study therefore proposes philosophy of science as a foundational framework for reconstructing contemporary tafsir through the integration of epistemology, methodology, and contextualization. Its central novelty is the conceptualization of a movement from reproductive tafsir to productive tafsir. Reproductive tafsir primarily preserves, repeats, or transfers inherited exegetical conclusions, whereas productive tafsir critically engages the classical heritage, identifies Qur'anic normative principles, incorporates relevant empirical and interdisciplinary knowledge, interprets changing realities, and generates ethically responsible responses to emerging problems. The study consequently seeks to formulate an epistemological and methodological framework that preserves the normative authority of the Qur'an while enabling tafsir to become intellectually productive, contextually relevant, interdisciplinary, and responsive to contemporary human and ecological challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative library research design with a philosophical-interpretive and critical approach. The study is designed to reconstruct the epistemological foundations of contemporary Qur'anic interpretation by examining the relationship between revelation, reason, tradition, empirical knowledge, and changing social realities (Chu, 2015; Lund, 2020). Library research is appropriate because the primary object of analysis is not a particular community or field site, but the intellectual construction of tafsir, philosophical arguments, hermeneutical methods, and contemporary Qur'anic interpretation developed in books, scholarly articles, and related academic sources (Kalisdha, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023).

The study adopts a philosophical-epistemological approach to examine the assumptions underlying the production and validation of Qur'anic interpretive knowledge (Nasri, 2019; Rashevskia & Semerikov, 2026). Four dimensions are examined: ontology, concerning the nature of the Qur'anic text and reality; epistemology, concerning the sources and criteria of valid interpretive knowledge; methodology, concerning the procedures through which text and

context are brought into dialogue; and axiology, concerning the ethical and transformative purposes of interpretation. This framework enables the study to move beyond merely comparing classical and contemporary tafsir toward examining the conditions under which interpretation can become productive and contextually responsible (Agrey, 2014; Nasri, 2023; Nasri et al., 2026).

The primary data sources consist of major works representing classical and contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics and Islamic thought, particularly the works of Muhammad Abduh, Fazlur Rahman, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Hasan Hanafi. Relevant Qur'anic verses concerning human responsibility, environmental balance, corruption, stewardship, and the relationship between humanity and nature are also treated as primary textual material (Banerjee, 2019; Steleżuk & Wolanin, 2023). The secondary sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, books, dissertations, and scholarly studies concerning the history and methodology of tafsir, philosophy of science, Islamic epistemology, hermeneutics, environmental ethics, and contemporary ecological problems (Church, 2002; Flowerday et al., 2026). Previous studies by Hameed and Nadeem (2023), Ali (2018), Saleh (2008), Kelly (2024), Rozi (2019), Marlinda et al. (2025), Alfani et al. (2025), and Khan (2025) are used particularly to establish the research gap and position the present study within existing scholarship.

Data are collected through documentary study and systematic literature review. Relevant sources are identified based on their relationship to four analytical themes: the epistemology of tafsir, methodological development, contextual hermeneutics, and responses to contemporary problems. The selected texts are then read critically to identify concepts, arguments, methodological assumptions, and relationships among revelation, reason, tradition, empirical knowledge, and context. Particular attention is given to passages that demonstrate either reproductive tendencies in tafsir or possibilities for productive reinterpretation (Coombes & Tresidder, 2026; Kalisdha, 2023; Yasmin et al., 2024).

Data analysis follows a qualitative philosophical-hermeneutical process consisting of data reduction, categorization, comparison, interpretation, synthesis, and conceptual reconstruction. First, relevant textual materials are selected and reduced according to the research questions. Second, the data are categorized into epistemological, methodological, contextual, and axiological dimensions. Third, the arguments of the selected thinkers and previous studies are comparatively examined. Fourth, the findings are interpreted through the philosophy-of-science framework. Finally, the results are synthesized into a

conceptual model of productive contemporary tafsir, moving from inherited textual understanding toward contextual and ethically oriented knowledge production (Berner, 2023; Bleicher, 2017).

The validity of the data is ensured through source triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and interpretive cross-checking. Source triangulation is conducted by comparing primary works with peer-reviewed secondary scholarship. Theoretical triangulation is achieved by placing Qur’anic hermeneutics in dialogue with philosophy of science, Islamic epistemology, and contemporary environmental thought. Interpretive validity is strengthened through critical comparison of competing arguments and by maintaining a clear distinction between textual evidence, scholarly interpretation, and the researcher’s conceptual synthesis (Afiyanti, 2008; Arslan, 2022; Brink, 1993; Roberts et al., 2006; Tariq, 2025).

The overall methodological flow is therefore directed from identifying contemporary problems, examining inherited interpretive epistemologies, critically engaging modern and contemporary Muslim thinkers, reconstructing the epistemological and methodological foundations of tafsir, and formulating a productive model of contextual Qur’anic interpretation. The methodological sequence is summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Methodological Framework for the Reconstruction of Productive Contemporary Tafsir

Methodological Component	Description
General Design	Qualitative library research focused on the reconstruction of contemporary Qur’anic interpretation.
Type and Approach	Philosophical-interpretive research using epistemological, hermeneutical, critical, and contextual approaches.
Primary Data Sources	Qur’anic verses relevant to human–nature relations and major works of Muhammad Abduh, Fazlur Rahman, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Muhammad ‘Abid al-Jabiri, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Hasan Hanafi.
Secondary Data Sources	Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, dissertations, and scholarly studies on tafsir,

	Qur'anic hermeneutics, philosophy of science, Islamic epistemology, environmental ethics, and contemporary problems.
Data Collection Technique	Documentary study and systematic literature review through identification, selection, reading, extraction, and classification of relevant literature.
Data Analysis Technique	Qualitative philosophical-hermeneutical analysis through reduction, categorization, comparison, interpretation, synthesis, and conceptual reconstruction.
Data Validity	Source triangulation, theoretical triangulation, critical comparison, and interpretive cross-checking.
Analytical Flow	Contemporary Problems → Qur'anic Principles → Classical Interpretive Heritage → Epistemological Critique → Dialogue with Contemporary Thinkers → Philosophical Reconstruction → Methodological Reconstruction → Contextual Interpretation → Productive Tafsir.
Expected Output	An epistemological and methodological framework that transforms tafsir from predominantly reproductive interpretation into productive, contextual, interdisciplinary, and problem-oriented Qur'anic knowledge.

Source: Developed by the researcher based on the analytical framework of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis shows that the reconstruction of contemporary tafsir requires a shift in the epistemological orientation of Qur'anic interpretation. The findings indicate that the main limitation does not lie in the classical tafsir tradition itself, but in the tendency to treat inherited interpretations as final products rather than as historically situated intellectual responses. The study identifies five interconnected findings: the need to reposition classical tafsir as an intellectual heritage rather than an epistemological endpoint; the integration of revelation, reason, and empirical knowledge; the contextualization of Qur'anic principles

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through contemporary realities; the reconstruction of interpretive methodology through dialogue with modern and contemporary Muslim thinkers; and the transformation of tafsir from reproductive interpretation into productive and ethically oriented knowledge.

Classical Tafsir as Intellectual Heritage, Not an Epistemological Endpoint

The first finding indicates that classical tafsir should be positioned as an essential intellectual heritage while remaining open to critical and contextual engagement. The classical exegetical tradition emerged through encounters between the Qur'anic text and the linguistic, theological, philosophical, legal, and social realities of particular historical periods. Therefore, the conclusions produced by classical mufasssirs should be understood within their epistemological and historical contexts. Saleh's (2008) study of al-Biqā'ī, for example, demonstrates that classical interpretation could engage with external intellectual resources, while Kelly (2024) shows methodological developments in the use of ḥadīth in al-Farrā's Qur'anic interpretation. These findings challenge the assumption that classical tafsir represents a homogeneous and completely closed interpretive system.

The implication is that contemporary tafsir should neither reject classical interpretations nor simply reproduce them. The productive position is to distinguish between the enduring principles contained in the classical heritage and interpretations that were shaped by specific historical circumstances. This distinction allows classical tafsir to function as a source of intellectual resources rather than as a fixed endpoint of interpretation. In this sense, the reconstruction of contemporary tafsir involves continuity through critical inheritance: preserving the authority of the tradition while reopening its intellectual potential for contemporary questions.

Integration of Revelation, Reason, and Empirical Knowledge

The second finding demonstrates that contemporary tafsir requires an epistemological integration of revelation, reason, and empirical knowledge. Revelation provides normative and ethical orientation, reason enables critical reflection and conceptual analysis, while empirical knowledge provides an understanding of the concrete realities to which Qur'anic principles are related. The separation of these dimensions can produce either textual reductionism or contextual reductionism. A purely textual approach risks interpreting contemporary problems without adequately understanding their empirical complexity, whereas an exclusively empirical approach may address technical problems without providing sufficient ethical and spiritual orientation.

This integrated epistemology is consistent with the intellectual directions developed by Abduh, Rahman, Abu Zayd, al-Jabiri, and Nasr. Abduh emphasizes rational engagement with revelation, Rahman develops a movement between historical context and general moral principles, Abu Zayd highlights the relationship between text and historical context, and al-Jabiri encourages critical examination of the structures through which knowledge is produced. Nasr adds an ecological and metaphysical dimension by connecting environmental degradation with the modern crisis of humanity's relationship with nature. The finding therefore suggests that contemporary tafsir should operate through a dialogical epistemology in which revelation, reason, tradition, and empirical knowledge complement rather than exclude one another.

Contextualization as a Bridge between Qur'anic Principles and Contemporary Problems

The third finding indicates that contextualization should not be understood merely as adapting an existing interpretation to a new situation. Rather, contextualization requires a systematic movement from contemporary reality to Qur'anic principles and back to contemporary reality. This is particularly important when interpreting ecological concepts such as *fasād*, *mīzān*, *khilāfah*, and *amānah*. Deforestation, environmental degradation, and landslides cannot be adequately understood only through the vocabulary of classical tafsir because their contemporary causes involve complex ecological, geological, economic, technological, and political factors. Qur'anic interpretation therefore needs to understand the empirical structure of the problem before formulating its ethical significance.

This finding reinforces Rahman's contextual methodology, particularly the movement from specific historical situations toward general moral principles and their contemporary application (Rahman, 1982). Contextualization consequently does not mean forcing contemporary meanings into the Qur'an. It involves identifying the normative orientation of revelation and relating it responsibly to changing realities. Through this approach, the Qur'anic concept of *fasād*, for example, can be examined not merely as an abstract moral category but in relation to concrete forms of ecological destruction. Tafsir thus becomes capable of generating ethical principles concerning environmental responsibility, prevention of ecological harm, sustainable resource use, and protection of future generations.

Reconstruction of Tafsir Methodology through Contemporary Muslim Thought

The fourth finding reveals that the methodological reconstruction of tafsir can be developed through a dialogue among different strands of modern and contemporary Islamic thought. Abduh provides the foundation of rational and reform-oriented interpretation; Rahman contributes historical contextualization and moral generalization; Abu Zayd emphasizes textuality, historicity, and the role of the interpreter; al-Jabiri contributes epistemological criticism; Nasr provides an Islamic ecological-metaphysical perspective; and Hanafi emphasizes the transformation of inherited intellectual heritage through its engagement with contemporary reality. These perspectives are not identical, but their differences provide complementary resources for reconstructing the methodology of tafsir.

The synthesis of these perspectives produces a methodology that is neither purely traditionalist nor detached from tradition. Hanafi's movement from heritage toward renewal and from text toward reality is particularly relevant to the transformation of tafsir into a productive intellectual practice. The methodology proposed by this study therefore places textual analysis, historical awareness, rational inquiry, empirical knowledge, and ethical evaluation within a single interpretive process. Such integration also prevents contextual interpretation from becoming arbitrary because contemporary contextualization remains connected to textual principles, methodological criteria, and epistemological accountability.

From Reproductive Tafsir to Productive Tafsir

The fifth and central finding is the emergence of a distinction between reproductive tafsir and productive tafsir. Reproductive tafsir refers to an interpretive orientation that primarily repeats, preserves, or transfers inherited exegetical conclusions without sufficiently reconstructing their relationship with changing realities. This does not mean that repetition of classical interpretations is inherently wrong; rather, it becomes problematic when reproduction becomes the dominant objective of interpretation. The historical development of tafsir itself demonstrates that classical scholars were productive precisely because they responded to the intellectual and social challenges of their respective periods (Hameed & Nadeem, 2023; Kelly, 2024; Saleh, 2008).

Productive tafsir, therefore, represents the principal conceptual contribution of this study. It begins with a contemporary problem, identifies the relevant Qur'anic principles, examines the historical and classical interpretive heritage, engages contemporary scientific and social knowledge, and produces a contextual ethical response. Its direction can be formulated as: contemporary problem → Qur'anic principle → classical interpretive dialogue → epistemological analysis → interdisciplinary knowledge → contextual

interpretation → ethical response. In this model, tafsir is not reduced to the preservation of previous meanings but becomes a disciplined process of producing Qur'anic knowledge capable of addressing new realities. The model is particularly applicable to ecological crises, where Qur'anic environmental ethics can be developed into practical orientations for preventing environmental destruction and strengthening human responsibility toward nature.

Synthesis of Findings

The five findings demonstrate that the reconstruction of contemporary tafsir is fundamentally an epistemological project rather than merely a methodological adjustment. Classical tafsir provides the intellectual heritage, philosophy of science provides the critical epistemological foundation, contemporary Muslim thinkers provide methodological resources, and contemporary realities provide the problems that require interpretation. The resulting framework positions tafsir as a dynamic form of knowledge production that maintains continuity with revelation while remaining responsive to changing human and ecological realities.

Accordingly, the central proposition of this study is that the future of contemporary tafsir does not depend on choosing between classical tradition and modernity. It depends on reconstructing the relationship between them through a rigorous epistemology. The productive tafsir model proposed here seeks to preserve textual responsibility while expanding interpretive capacity, enabling the Qur'an to function not merely as an object of explanation but as a source of ethical and intellectual transformation in response to emerging challenges.

Table 2. Synthesis of Findings on the Epistemological Reconstruction of Contemporary Tafsir

No.	Sub-theme of Finding	Main Finding	Epistemological Implication	Contribution to Productive Tafsir
1	Classical Tafsir as Intellectual Heritage	Classical tafsir represents a historically dynamic intellectual tradition rather than a closed and homogeneous system.	Classical interpretations should be critically inherited and contextualized rather than treated as final epistemological conclusions.	Establishes continuity between classical intellectual heritage and contemporary interpretive renewal.
2	Integration of Revelation,	Contemporary tafsir requires	Valid interpretation	Enables tafsir to address

	Reason, and Empirical Knowledge	dialogue between revelation, rational inquiry, tradition, and empirical knowledge.	requires complementary sources of knowledge while maintaining the normative authority of revelation.	complex contemporary problems through interdisciplinary engagement.
3	Contextualization of Qur'anic Principles	Qur'anic principles need to be related systematically to changing historical and empirical realities.	Context becomes an epistemological component of interpretation rather than merely an external consideration.	Connects Qur'anic concepts such as <i>fasād</i> , <i>mīzān</i> , <i>khilāfah</i> , and <i>amānah</i> with contemporary ecological and social problems.
4	Methodological Reconstruction	Insights from Abduh, Rahman, Abu Zayd, al-Jabiri, Nasr, and Hanafi provide complementary resources for reconstructing tafsir methodology.	Interpretation requires critical reflection on its sources, assumptions, methods, and objectives.	Produces a more rigorous and interdisciplinary methodology for contemporary Qur'anic interpretation.
5	Reproductive to Productive Tafsir	Tafsir needs to move from predominantly reproducing inherited conclusions toward producing responsible responses to emerging realities.	Interpretive validity involves not only textual fidelity but also methodological rigor, contextual relevance, and ethical responsibility.	Establishes productive tafsir as a model of Qur'anic knowledge production oriented toward contemporary transformation.
6	Ecological Application	Environmental crises provide a concrete field	Qur'anic ecological principles	Transforms ecological concepts in the

for testing the productivity of contextual tafsir.	require dialogue with environmental, geological, social, and disaster-related knowledge.	Qur'an into ethical orientations for environmental protection, prevention, and sustainability.
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Source: Developed by the researcher based on the analysis of primary and secondary literature.

The table demonstrates that the findings form an interconnected epistemological sequence rather than six independent themes. Classical tafsir provides the intellectual heritage, while philosophy of science supplies the critical framework for examining how interpretive knowledge is produced and validated. The integration of revelation, reason, and empirical knowledge then enables Qur'anic principles to be contextualized within changing realities. Dialogue with contemporary Muslim thinkers strengthens the methodological reconstruction, while ecological problems provide a concrete testing ground for the resulting framework.

The synthesis ultimately leads to the central distinction between reproductive and productive tafsir. Productive tafsir does not reject classical interpretations but critically inherits them, identifies their normative principles, engages contemporary knowledge, and develops responsible responses to new problems. Thus, the principal contribution of the study is not merely a new reading of particular Qur'anic verses, but an epistemological and methodological framework for making contemporary tafsir more contextual, interdisciplinary, and transformative.

Discussions

The findings of this study demonstrate that the reconstruction of contemporary tafsir must begin with an epistemological reorientation rather than merely a change in interpretive themes. The central finding is that tafsir needs to move from a predominantly reproductive orientation, which tends to preserve inherited conclusions, toward a productive orientation capable of responding to changing realities. This finding is consistent with the historical evidence presented by Hameed and Nadeem (2023), who demonstrate that Qur'anic interpretive methods have developed through different historical stages. Rozi (2019) similarly shows the diversity of classical tafsir traditions. These studies confirm that tafsir has never been entirely static. The present study goes further

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by asking what epistemological conditions are required for this historical dynamism to continue in the contemporary period. Thus, the contribution of this study is not simply to argue for “renewal,” but to provide a philosophical basis for explaining why and how renewal can be methodologically legitimate.

The first finding, concerning the position of classical tafsir as intellectual heritage rather than an epistemological endpoint, can be understood through the methodological diversity identified in previous scholarship. Saleh (2008) demonstrates that al-Biqā‘ī could employ biblical materials in interpreting the Qur’an, while Kelly (2024) identifies a significant transformation in the use of ḥadīth citation in al-Farrā’s *Ma‘ānī al-Qur’ān*. Marlinda et al. (2025) further demonstrate the methodological characteristics of al-Khāzin’s tafsir. These studies are important because they reveal that classical tafsir itself was produced through intellectual engagement and methodological development. The present study builds on this insight by shifting the analytical question from “what method did classical mufasssirs use?” to “how can the productive intellectual character of classical tafsir be reconstructed for contemporary interpretation?” The novelty therefore lies in transforming historical evidence of interpretive dynamism into an epistemological argument for contemporary productivity.

This finding also resonates with Hasan Hanafi’s concept of *al-turāth wa al-tajdīd*, which seeks to establish a productive relationship between inherited Islamic heritage and contemporary reality (Hanafi, 1992). For Hanafi, tradition should not become an intellectual burden that prevents engagement with the present; it should become a resource for renewal. His movement from text toward reality (*min al-naṣṣ ilā al-wāqī‘*) provides an especially relevant conceptual foundation for the present study (Hanafi, 2005). The present research develops this insight within Qur’anic interpretation by proposing that classical tafsir should function as a critical interlocutor rather than as a final interpretive authority. This distinction is important because it avoids two extremes: the rejection of classical heritage and the uncritical reproduction of its conclusions.

The second finding concerns the integration of revelation, reason, and empirical knowledge. This finding is strongly supported by the intellectual project of Muhammad Abduh, who emphasized rationality and the relevance of Qur’anic interpretation to social reality. Abduh’s reformist orientation demonstrates that reason is not necessarily an opponent of revelation but can function as an instrument for understanding its guidance within changing circumstances. The present study extends this position by placing rational inquiry within a broader epistemological structure that also includes empirical knowledge. Such an extension is particularly important for contemporary

problems that possess complex material dimensions, such as climate change, deforestation, landslides, and environmental degradation. Qur'anic interpretation cannot adequately address these problems without understanding the empirical mechanisms through which they occur.

Fazlur Rahman provides a further methodological foundation through his *double movement* approach. His methodology begins with the historical circumstances surrounding revelation, derives general moral principles, and then brings those principles into contemporary situations (Rahman, 1982). The present study shares this contextual orientation but extends its epistemological dimension. Contextual interpretation is not merely a movement between text and history; it also requires engagement with contemporary bodies of knowledge. For example, interpreting ecological destruction through the Qur'anic concept of *fasād* requires both textual-moral analysis and an understanding of ecological science, environmental policy, disaster risk, and human behavior. The contribution of the present study is therefore to conceptualize contextual tafsir as an interdisciplinary epistemological process rather than merely a historical-hermeneutical procedure.

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd strengthens this argument by emphasizing the relationship between the Qur'anic text, language, history, and the interpretive activity of human beings. His approach challenges the assumption that meaning can simply be transferred from a historical text into a contemporary context without mediation. Interpretation inevitably involves an encounter between text, interpreter, and historical circumstances (Abu Zayd, 2018). The present study develops this insight by emphasizing the responsibility of the interpreter to make that encounter epistemologically transparent. The interpreter must distinguish between what is derived from the Qur'anic text, what is inherited from previous exegetes, what is generated through contemporary knowledge, and what constitutes the interpreter's own contextual synthesis. This distinction strengthens methodological accountability and prevents contextualization from becoming arbitrary subjectivity.

The epistemological dimension is further enriched by Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri's critique of Arab-Islamic reason. Al-Jabiri's analysis demonstrates that Islamic intellectual production is shaped by particular epistemological structures that influence how knowledge is classified, justified, and transmitted (al-Jabiri, 1984–2001). This perspective is important for the present finding because the problem of reproductive tafsir cannot be attributed simply to individual interpreters. It may also reflect inherited structures of knowledge that privilege transmission over critical reconstruction. The present study therefore directs

attention beyond the content of tafsir toward the epistemological mechanisms through which interpretive authority is established. Its novelty lies in applying this critical epistemological perspective specifically to the reconstruction of contemporary tafsir.

The ecological dimension of the findings brings Seyyed Hossein Nasr's thought into direct dialogue with the proposed framework. Nasr interprets the modern ecological crisis not merely as a technical problem but as a consequence of a deeper spiritual and metaphysical rupture between human beings and the natural world (Nasr, 1997). This perspective complements the present finding that Qur'anic ecological interpretation must integrate normative revelation with contemporary environmental knowledge. Yet the present study moves beyond a general Islamic ecological critique by asking how the Qur'anic text can be methodologically interpreted so that ecological ethics become responsive to concrete problems. Concepts such as *mīzān*, *amānah*, *khilāfah*, and *fasād* can therefore be reconstructed through dialogue with environmental science and disaster studies rather than remaining at the level of general moral exhortation.

Hasan Hanafi's thought provides a bridge between the epistemological and transformative dimensions of the findings. His concern with *turāth* and *tajdīd* emphasizes the necessity of reconstructing inherited knowledge in relation to contemporary reality, while his orientation from text toward reality provides a conceptual basis for making Islamic thought socially transformative (Hanafi, 1992, 2005). In the context of this study, the movement from text to reality does not mean subordinating the Qur'an to contemporary circumstances. Instead, it means bringing Qur'anic principles into a disciplined encounter with reality so that interpretation can produce meaningful ethical consequences. This provides an important theoretical foundation for the distinction developed in this research between reproductive tafsir and productive tafsir.

The findings can also be compared directly with studies concerning the application of classical and modern tafsir to contemporary issues. Ali (2018) shows the important role of modern tafsir in contemporary Islamic thought, while Khan (2025) demonstrates the possibility of applying classical interpretations of *āyāt al-aḥkām* to contemporary contexts. Alfani et al. (2025) similarly demonstrate how classical and modern tafsir can generate different perspectives on gender equality. These studies confirm that contextual application is already an important direction within contemporary Qur'anic studies. Nevertheless, their primary focus remains on particular trends or issues. The present study addresses a more fundamental level by asking what epistemological and methodological framework should enable such

contextualization across emerging problems. Consequently, the novelty does not lie in claiming that tafsir can respond to contemporary issues, but in formulating the philosophical conditions that make such responsiveness systematic and responsible.

The studies examined also reveal an important distinction concerning methodological research. Hameed and Nadeem (2023), Rozi (2019), Saleh (2008), Kelly (2024), and Marlinda et al. (2025) primarily reconstruct the historical development or methodological characteristics of tafsir. Their contributions are essential for demonstrating the diversity and dynamism of the tradition. However, they do not formulate a comprehensive philosophy-of-science framework connecting historical tafsir, epistemology, contemporary knowledge, and emerging realities. The present study therefore moves from historical description toward epistemological reconstruction. It does not simply add another account of tafsir methodology; it seeks to explain the intellectual conditions under which tafsir can continue to generate new knowledge.

The studies by Clymer and Oldani (2023), Stoica (2024), and Jonsson (2014), although situated outside Qur'anic studies, also indirectly reinforce the philosophical significance of the present research. Their discussions of interpretation in scientific contexts demonstrate that interpretation is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between theoretical frameworks, representation, evidence, and reality. Their relevance here is therefore epistemological rather than exegetical. The present study applies this broader philosophical concern to Qur'anic interpretation by asking how interpretive claims are constructed, justified, and related to changing realities. This helps establish philosophy of science not as an external theoretical addition but as a critical instrument for examining the foundations of contemporary tafsir.

The most significant contribution of the present study is therefore the formulation of productive tafsir as an epistemological and methodological model. Unlike reproductive tafsir, productive tafsir does not merely transfer previous conclusions to new situations. It begins with a contemporary problem, identifies relevant Qur'anic principles, critically examines the classical interpretive heritage, engages modern and contemporary intellectual perspectives, incorporates relevant empirical knowledge, and formulates an ethically responsible contextual interpretation. This framework brings together the complementary insights of Abduh on rational reform, Rahman on contextual moral reasoning, Abu Zayd on textual historicity, al-Jabiri on epistemological critique, Nasr on spiritual-ecological consciousness, and Hanafi on tradition, renewal, and reality.

Accordingly, the study's target is not to replace classical tafsir with contemporary interpretation, nor to declare classical tafsir inadequate. Its target is the epistemological closure that occurs when historically situated interpretations are treated as permanently sufficient for realities that have fundamentally changed. The proposed reconstruction seeks to recover the productive intellectual character that characterized the classical tradition itself while providing contemporary interpreters with stronger philosophical and methodological accountability. In this sense, the novelty of the study lies in integrating epistemology, methodology, and contextualization into a single framework for productive tafsir. Its broader contribution is to reposition Qur'anic interpretation as a dynamic form of knowledge production capable of engaging not only established theological and legal questions but also emerging ecological, technological, humanitarian, and social challenges.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This study concludes that the reconstruction of contemporary tafsir requires an epistemological and methodological transformation from reproductive interpretation toward productive interpretation. The findings demonstrate that classical tafsir should be positioned as an intellectual heritage rather than an epistemological endpoint, while contemporary interpretation needs to integrate revelation, reason, empirical knowledge, and changing realities. The perspectives of Muhammad Abduh, Fazlur Rahman, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Hasan Hanafi provide complementary foundations for this reconstruction through rational reform, contextual interpretation, textual historicity, epistemological criticism, ecological-spiritual consciousness, and the renewal of Islamic heritage. The proposed model establishes a methodological movement from contemporary problems to Qur'anic principles, critical engagement with classical tafsir, interdisciplinary knowledge, contextual interpretation, and ethical response. Thus, the relevance of tafsir to emerging problems such as environmental degradation, deforestation, landslides, and other contemporary crises depends not on abandoning tradition, but on reconstructing its epistemological productivity so that Qur'anic guidance can generate responsible and transformative responses to changing realities.

Recommendation

Practitioners of Qur'anic interpretation are recommended to develop contextual and interdisciplinary interpretive practices that maintain textual and

methodological rigor while engaging relevant scientific and social knowledge. Religious institutions and regulators are encouraged to create academic and institutional spaces that support responsible *ijtihad*, methodological renewal, and the development of Qur'anic responses to emerging social, ecological, technological, and humanitarian problems without compromising the integrity of Islamic scholarship. Academicians are encouraged to further test and develop the productive tafsir framework through interdisciplinary research and concrete case studies, particularly in environmental ethics, climate change, disaster mitigation, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and other emerging fields. Future research should also examine how the proposed epistemological framework can be operationalized into systematic interpretive methodologies and evaluated through specific contemporary cases.

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