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Mauḍū'i's Interpretation: Historical, Methodological, and Urgent Analysis in a Humanitarian Context

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ABSTRACT

The Qur'an, as *hudan li al-nās* (a guidance for humankind), remains perpetually relevant amid the growing complexity of modern life and its humanitarian challenges. In the face of rapid social mobility and diverse human problems, the need for a thematic understanding of the Qur'an has become increasingly urgent. The *maudu'i* (thematic) exegesis method emerges to meet this need by examining specific themes comprehensively, thereby offering contextual solutions and guidance. This study employs a library research approach to conduct an in-depth exploration of the position and dynamics of *maudu'i* interpretation within contemporary exegetical thought. The discussion focuses on five main aspects: (a) the factors underlying the emergence of the *maudu'i* method, (b) its urgency in addressing modern humanitarian issues, (c) the roles and contributions of scholars in its development, (d) methodological differences between *maudu'i* and *muqaran* (comparative) exegesis, and (e) the reasons behind the growing interest in this method in the modern era. The findings reveal that the emergence of *maudu'i* interpretation is driven by the need to present the Qur'an's guidance systematically in response to specific issues not fully addressed by other interpretative methods. Its significance is further emphasized by its ability to offer holistic solutions to contemporary problems and to promote a more applicative, thematic, and contextually relevant understanding of the Qur'an in modern life.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an, as a guide for mankind and a mercy for the universe, is a timeless source of teachings that remains relevant throughout the ages. In line with that, the Quran is a miracle that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW in Arabic, accompanied by special aspects of its language that require knowledge and theory that function as tools to understand the contents and content contained therein (Fauzani, 2024). Since the early days of Islam, efforts to understand this divine guidance have given rise to a discipline known as *'Ulum al-Tafsīr* (the science of interpretation). For more than a millennium, Islamic scholarship has been dominated by the analytical method of interpretation applied by great commentators such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and al-Zamakhsyarī. Through the approach of the order of *tartīb muṣḥafī* (order according to the arrangement of the mushaf), they examine the linguistic aspects, *asbāb al-nuzūl* (reasons for the revelation of verses), qirā'āt (reading variants), and the legal implications *(fiqhiyyah)* of the verses of the Qur'an (Al-Farmawi, 1977).

As one of the methods of interpretation that emerged in the pre-modern era, *tahlīlī* interpretation is a method of interpretation whose explanation includes reading verses, *naḥw* and *ṡarf* structure, cause of *asbāb al-nuzūl* verse, global meaning of verse, wisdom regulations and others (Yansah et al., 2026). In addition to explaining vocabulary and *lafẓ*, *tahlīlī* also explains the focus and content of sentences, such as the elements of *i`jāz*, *balāghah* and the beauty of sentence structure, as well as what can be taken from sentences that are useful for *fiqh* law, sharia evidence, linguistic meaning, and morals. There are many books that explain the Qur'an and what is used in the study of interpretation is the use of *tahlīlī* interpretation, namely interpreting the verses of the Qur'an sequentially according to the order of the verses in the book, from the beginning of Surah al-Fatihah to the end of Surah al-Nas (Yahya et al., 2022).

In light of the foregoing discussion, *tahlīlī* (analytical) interpretation can be affirmed as a foundational method in Qur'anic studies that systematically unpacks the meanings of the Qur'an through a sequential, verse-by-verse approach following the *tartīb muṣḥafī*. This method is characterized by its comprehensive analytical scope, encompassing linguistic structures (*naḥw* and *ṣarf*), semantic nuances, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *qirā'āt*, rhetorical dimensions such as *balāghah* and *i'jāz*, as well as legal, theological, and moral implications derived from the text. As such, *tahlīlī* interpretation not only reflects a philological and exegetical rigor rooted in the classical tradition but also establishes a detailed and text-centered framework for understanding the Qur'an. However, its methodological emphasis on linear and atomistic analysis often leads to fragmented insights, thereby limiting its capacity to construct a holistic and thematic worldview of the Qur'anic message. Consequently, while *tahlīlī* remains indispensable as a foundational exegetical tool, its implications in contemporary Qur'anic studies call for complementary approaches that can integrate its depth with broader, more contextual and thematic perspectives

Entering the 19th and 20th centuries, Muslims faced systemic and multidimensional global challenges. The emerging issues concerned not only worship and law, but also extended to humanitarian issues such as the ecological crisis, global economic inequality, human rights, gender equality, bioethics (such as cloning and organ transplantation), and the rise of religious radicalism resulting from textual readings of the Qur'an (Az-Zahra, 2022). In this context, the *tahlīlī* method began to show its limitations. Its analytical and sequential focus often resulted in a partial and fragmented understanding of the Qur'an's messages, making it difficult to build a comprehensive worldview (weltanschauung) (Mustofa, 2019; Sholihat & Shintia, 2024).

In response to these conditions, contemporary commentators developed the *mauḍu'ī* (thematic) method of interpretation. This approach starts "from the problem to the Qur'an," namely by compiling all verses related to a particular theme and then analyzing them comprehensively to obtain a complete Qur'anic perspective on the issue (Sholihat & Shintia, 2024). Thus, the *mauḍu'ī* method seeks to present a systematic, relevant, and contextual understanding of the Qur'an to address the challenges of modern life. This method differs from the *muqāran* (comparative) approach, which emphasizes comparing the opinions of commentators, and the *ijmālī* (global) approach, which only provides a general overview (Arib & Mokodenseho, 2023). The emergence of *mauḍu'ī* interpretation is not a discovery that emerged from a vacuum, but rather this phenomenon is a form of expression of global socio-historical dynamics directly in response to intellectual stagnation and the challenges of modernity. The emergence of *mauḍu'i* interpretation is a reflection of the need to prove that the Qur'an continues to have strong relevance and is able to lead in modern civilization (Azkiya et al., 2026).

Despite its growing popularity in academic circles, the concept of the *maḍu'ī* method remains frequently misunderstood and overlaps with other methods of interpretation. Several previous studies have focused on specific aspects, such as the formulation of methodological steps (Al-Farmawi, 1977), practical application in contemporary interpretation (Az-Zahra, 2022; Shihab, 2013), or methodological comparisons with *muqāran* interpretation (Arib & Mokodenseho, 2023). However, studies that systematically integrate all these dimensions are still rare. Thus, there is a research gap in efforts to comprehensively understand the position and dynamics of the *mauḍu'ī* method of interpretation within contemporary exegetical thought. Another study also explains that maudui interpretation has advantages in responding to the challenges of an ever-evolving era. Unlike tafsir *taḥlili*, for example, which focuses solely on analyzing the textual content of Quranic verses, *mauḍ'uī* interpretation is able to analyze the Quran based on a context that is considered more capable of understanding the Quran holistically, and focuses more on specific themes deemed relevant to the needs and social and cultural problems of the community today.

Mauḍu'ī interpretation is considered to have the advantage of explaining certain topics systematically and comprehensively, which is considered more relevant in analyzing broader discussions in Islamic studies. However, the method is not without its drawbacks. According to Nursidik and Maulana, quoted from (Gufron et al., 2025), one of the weaknesses of the *mauḍu'ī* interpretation method is the loss of contextual meaning or specific meaning

of Quranic verses if not carried out carefully and precisely. The criticism that is always directed at other *mauḍu'ī* interpretations is the potential to reduce the objectivity of the interpretation of a verse, such as when the interpretation of the same verse topic, but analyzed by interpreters of different schools of thought, will have the potential for different interpretations of that one verse, because there is a conflict of interest that is based on the schools of interpretation (Aisyah, 2025; Haq et al., 2023).

This study aims to comprehensively analyze the five main aspects of *mauḍu'ī* interpretation, namely: (1) the historical factors underlying its emergence, (2) its urgency in answering the problems of modern humanity, (3) the contributions of the main figures who developed it, (4) its methodological differences with *muqāran* interpretation, and (5) the reasons for the increasing popularity of this method in the contemporary era. Thus, this study is expected to provide a more complete conceptual and epistemological mapping of the dynamics of *mauḍu'ī* interpretation in the modern context.

Methodologically, this study employed a qualitative approach with library research. Data were collected from primary sources, including classical and contemporary works of interpretation, as well as secondary sources, such as books on interpretation methodology and scientific journal articles. The analysis was conducted using content analysis and argumentative synthesis to identify patterns, relationships, and the direction of development of *mauḍu'ī* exegetical thought. This approach allows researchers to explore the historical relevance and methodological significance of the *mauḍu'ī* method in addressing the challenges of the times. With this framework, this study argues that the emergence of *mauḍu'ī* interpretation is a historical necessity that confirms the vitality of the Qur'an's message to modern reality. Furthermore, its difference from the *muqāran* method indicates a paradigm shift from "understanding the thoughts of scholars" to "understanding the Qur'anic worldview." This proves that the *mauḍu'ī* method functions not only as a methodological innovation but also as an epistemological bridge that strengthens the relevance and universality of the Qur'an for contemporary human life.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Factors Behind the Emergence of the *Mauḍu'ī* Interpretation Method

The emergence of *mauḍu'ī* interpretation as a systematic method in the modern era did not happen suddenly, but was the result of the culmination of three main interrelated factors: the internal weaknesses of the *tahlīlī* method, the external challenges of the times, and the demands of the internal structure of the Qur'an itself.

First, Methodological weakness factors of tahlīlī interpretation. The tahlīlī method focuses on sequential analysis of verses *(tartīb muṣḥafī)* has limitations when used to understand the concept as a whole. A very micro approach to linguistic aspects *(lughawī)* and *asbāb al-nuzūl* often results in fragmented understanding (Mustofa, 2019). For example, a literal reading of the *nushūz* verse (Q.S. 4:34) can create gender bias if not balanced with a thematic approach to other verses such as *mu'āsyarah bi al-ma'rūf* (Q.S. 4:19), the principle of *zawjiyyah* (Q.S. 30:21), and spiritual equality (Q.S. 33:35). This methodological vacuum then opens up space for the birth of *mauḍu'ī* interpretations. T

The methodological weakness of the *tahlīlī* approach does not lie in its inability to explicate the detailed meanings of individual verses, but rather in its limitation in synthesizing these meanings into a coherent and comprehensive conceptual framework. An approach that is excessively focused on partial analysis—whether in terms of linguistic aspects or the occasions of revelation—tends to overlook the thematic interconnections between verses, which are essential for grasping the Qur'an's message in a holistic manner. Consequently, the resulting interpretations may become reductionist and susceptible to bias, particularly when addressing complex issues such as gender relations. In this regard, the *mauḍū'ī* method emerges as a significant complementary approach, offering a corrective by systematically assembling all relevant verses within a single thematic framework, thereby enabling a more integrative, contextual, and balanced understanding.

In addition, the *taḥlīlī* interpretation method has been criticized for its characteristic tendency to be too partial or fragmented, which makes the Quran seem as if it is not a complete whole to provide guidance and solutions for people with different contexts of needs and problems that are factual. In addition, *taḥlīlī* interpretation is considered too subjective due to the fanaticism of the schools of thought *(madhhab)* of its commentators, especially when the tahlili interpretation is a logical interpretation *(tafsīr bi al-ra'yi)*. Infiltration that is outside the discussion of the verses of the Quran is also often found in the tahlili interpretation method, such as the many *isrāliyyāt* and hadiths that are weak or even pale in narration, adding to the criticism of *taḥlīlī* interpretation (Akhyar, 2021; F. Amin, 2017).

From this perspective, the limitations of the *tahlīlī* method are not only technical-methodological, but also impact the construction of a less comprehensive normative understanding in reading the message of the Qur'an. When interpretation is carried out partially and separately from the entire network of meanings between verses, the potential for reduction of meaning becomes unavoidable, and can even give rise to biased and disproportionate conclusions. Therefore, the need for an approach capable of integrating various verses into a unified theme becomes increasingly urgent, so that the message of the Qur'an can be understood completely and contextually. In this case, tafsir *mauḍū'ī* presents as a methodological alternative that not only complements but also corrects the weaknesses of tahlīlī by constructing a more systematic, interconnected, and unity-oriented framework of understanding, making it relevant to addressing contemporary social and scientific problems.

Second, External challenges in the form of modernity and ideological warfare. The 19th to 20th centuries AD were an era of colonialism and modernization, when Western ideologies such as capitalism, Marxism, and secularism shook the fabric of Islamic thought. Orientalist critics such as Theodor Nöldeke and Richard Bell considered the Qur'an unsystematic and fragmented. Reformers such as Muḥammad ‘Abduh dan Rasyīd Riḍa Through *Tafsīr al-Manār*, a responded to this criticism by constructing a more rational and social interpretation. It was in this context that the *mauḍu'ī* interpretation emerged as an intellectual instrument to demonstrate that the Qur'an possesses a coherent worldview covering all aspects of life, from ethics to economics. This approach also serves as a post-colonial response to Western epistemological hegemony (Sholihat & Shintia, 2024).

According to Banna and Hilimi in (Ash-Shiddiq & Rahmi, 2024), methodologically, tafsir *mauḍu'ī* is a modern term that was first introduced in the 20th century CE and later developed into a separate discipline in the study of Qur'anic interpretation. This term began to be popularized when Ahmad Sayyid al-Kumi (1912–1991) made it a lecture material at the Faculty of *Uṣul al-Dīn*, Al-Azhar University, Cairo. However, historically, elements of the thematic approach had actually emerged long before that period. Its development became more systematic after al-Farmawi published the work *Al-Bidāyah fi al-Tafsir al-Mauḍ'ī* in 1977. The embryo of this approach in the modern context can be traced since the end of the 19th century through the thoughts of Muhammad Abduh, who emphasized the importance of a social-rational approach *('aqliyyah ijtimā'iyyah)* and context coherence (siyaq) in understanding the verses of the Al-Qur'an.

This emphasizes that the emergence of *mauḍu'ī* interpretation cannot be separated from the epistemological need to reposition the Qur'an as a source of complete and relevant knowledge amidst the dominance of modern Western discourse. The criticisms leveled by figures such as Theodor Noldeke and Richard Bell were not only academic in nature, but also had implications for the construction of the intellectual image of Islam as a tradition considered less systematic. In response to this, reformers such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida attempted to build an interpretation paradigm that was more rational, contextual, and responsive to social realities. Therefore, *mauḍu'ī* interpretation can be understood as a form of intellectual resistance as well as a strategy for discourse reconstruction, which seeks to demonstrate that the Qur'an has a coherent structure of meaning and is capable of becoming a basis for the formation of a competitive ethical, social, and civilizational system amidst the currents of global modernity.

Third, internal demands of the structure of the Qur'anic text. Major themes such as monotheism, justice, and the afterlife are scattered throughout various *Makkiyyah* and *Madaniyyah* suras, thus requiring an inductive approach to understanding the messages of the Qur'an thematically. Fazlur Rahman emphasized that to discover the universal ethical principles of the Qur'an, an interpreter must inductively collect all verses with the same theme, then apply them deductively to the modern context. In fact, classical scholars such as al-Biqā'ī, through the theory of *munāsabah*, have pioneered the basis for thematic interpretation that looks at the coherence between verses at the macro level (Mustofa, 2019).

A strong mastery of Qur'anic vocabulary is essential, as many terms are polysemous and their meanings have evolved over time. The stylistic features and rhetorical expressions of the Qur'an must also be carefully examined in order to grasp the intended meanings. In addition, a comprehensive understanding of human conditions, the errors and transgressions of past peoples and nations, the exemplary lives of the Prophet and his Companions, as well as the divine laws governing human relationships, is necessary to achieve a deeper comprehension of the Qur'an. According to ‘Abduh and Riḍā, the application of these diverse principles in interpretation enables exegetes to highlight the Qur'an's essential character as a "guidance and mercy" (*hudan wa raḥmatan*) for humanity. Conversely, neglecting these principles may hinder Muslims from attaining an authentic understanding of the Qur'anic teachings (Ismail, 2017).

This explanation emphasizes that the internal demands of the structure of the Qur'an inherently lead to the need for a thematic approach capable of capturing the unity of meaning across verses and surahs. The spread of key themes across various historical and editorial contexts necessitates a method that does not stop at partial

readings, but is capable of reconstructing the network of meaning comprehensively. In this regard, Fazlur Rahman's thinking on double movement further emphasizes the importance of the process of induction on the entire thematic verse, which is then deductively transformed into the contemporary context. Similarly, al-Biqāʿī's contribution through the theory of *munāsabah* shows that awareness of the structural coherence of the Qur'an is rooted in the classical tradition, although it has not been systematically formulated as a thematic method. Thus, the *mauḍuʿī* interpretation is not only a modern methodological innovation, but also a logical continuation of the textual demands of the Qur'an itself, which requires an integrative, holistic, and contextual reading in revealing its universal messages.

2.2. The Urgency of Maudhu'ī Interpretation Amidst Increasingly Complex Humanitarian Problems

The urgency of maudhu'ī interpretation in the contemporary era is increasingly strong due to its ability to move from a textual-literal approach to a solution-maqā approach.yesidī-from "what is the meaning of this verse?" to "what is the Qur'an's solution to this problem?"

a. Global Ecological Crisis.

The taḥlīlī interpretation tends to stop at the prohibition of causing damage (Q.S. al-Aʿrāf: 56), while the *mauḍū'ī* interpretation allows for the formation of a more complete Islamic environmental theology based on the concept of the caliph (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 30), balance *(tawāzun)* (Q.S. al-Raḥmān: 7-9), gratitude towards resources (Q.S. Ibrāhīm: 7), and accountability of deeds (Q.S. al-Zalzalah: 7-8) (Az-Zahra, 2022, pp. 115-120). The thematic approach in the *mauḍū'ī* interpretation method allows for the reinterpretation of natural verses in the context of current environmental challenges, and can be a transformative strategy in education, da'wah, and public policy based on spiritual values, thus showing that humans have a moral responsibility to God's creation *(ḥablum min al-nās)*, not only responsibility to God alone *(Ḥablum minalLāh)*. It is hoped that awareness to protect the environment as part of faith and devotion to God (D. A. Putri et al., 2025; Rudiana et al., 2025). Related to this context, *māuḍūī* interpretation as an interpretation method that tends to be included in the typology of contemporary interpretation, provides a new picture of a Cosmo centric approach that positions humans as guardians of the trust to maintain cosmic balance, not only as the most important center of creatures among other universes (antroposentris) (Wasil & Muizudin, 2023).

This perspective further underscores that the *mauḍū'ī* method is not merely a methodological alternative, but a paradigm shift in Qur'anic hermeneutics that reorients ethical consciousness from an anthropocentric to a more integrated Cosmo centric framework. By systematically connecting dispersed Qur'anic principles, this approach enables the formulation of a coherent environmental ethic that is both theologically grounded and practically applicable. It also reinforces the idea that environmental responsibility is not an optional moral extension, but an intrinsic dimension of religious commitment, embedded within the broader objectives *(maqāṣid)* of the *Sharīʿah*. Consequently, the *mauḍū'ī* interpretation offers a critical foundation for interdisciplinary engagement, bridging scriptural insights with contemporary ecological discourse, and fostering a value-based framework that can inform sustainable development, ethical governance, and collective environmental stewardship in the modern world.

b. Islamic Economics and Finance.

The thematic interpretation of the Qur'anic economic system integrates the prohibition of usury (Q.S. 2:275), *zakāt* (Q.S. 9:103), *infāq* (Q.S. 2:261), the prohibition of *gharār* and *maysīr*, and the principle of distributive justice (Q.S. 59:7). Muhamamd Bāqir al-Ṣadr in *Iqtiṣādunā* emphasizes the importance of an alternative economic framework based on thematic interpretation (Al-Sadr, 1982). Bāqir al-Ṣadr firmly stated that Islam places great emphasis on the role of political leadership in regulating socio-economic activities in order to increase economic development and eliminate waste. In other words, Islamic economics in the Qur'an demands the creation of an economic ecosystem that is civilized, just and prosperous for other layers of society, not only to be enjoyed by a handful of groups or individuals (Fahlevi, 2019). As one of the first *mauḍūī* exegesis studies to discuss economic verses related to topics in the Quran, it also presents the idea that a comprehensive economic mindset must be created that integrates Islamic values with modern economic principles, providing a viable alternative to the conventional economic system (Dalimunthe, 2024).

This urgency has prompted *mufassir* to present the Quran to the public as a solution and economic strategy in the modern era. The Quran can be analyzed to explain its position, which comprehensively addresses the economic realm as an instrument for shaping societal welfare. The Quran has a unique alternative method and pattern for alleviating poverty and raising the economic standard of society, which differs from capitalist, social, or

liberal economic patterns. It is an economy based on community empowerment, such as *zakāt, infāq*, and *waqf*, in particular, which serve as the pivot for building the community economy. Therefore, it can be revealed that the foundation of Islamic economic thinking is *ta'āwun*, which is based on mutual care and mutual assistance, rather than based on massive exploitation and exploitation as is the basis of capitalist and socialist economies (Prayitna, 2023; M. S. Putri & Chozin, 2024; Wiyono, 2016).

A thematic approach based on economic topics in Quranic verses also helps reveal an Islamic economic paradigm grounded in ethics, balance, and social responsibility, thus fostering a just and sustainable economic system (Rudiana et al., 2025). Furthermore, a comprehensive interpretation of the Quranic economics can foster economic ideas and policies that foster a prosperous, dignified society free from exploitation and inequality. It is also hoped that it will contribute to enriching Islamic economic discourse by providing a conceptual framework for applying Quranic values to building a community economy (Rosyid & Kunaifi, 2025).

c. Bioethics and Medicine.

New issues such as cloning and organ transplantation do not have specific texts. Therefore, tafsir *mauḍū'ī* becomes an important ijtihad tool for interpreting the principles *ḥifẓ al-nafs* and the concept of human creation in a new context (Az-Zahra, 2022). Thus, without the *mauḍū'ī* method, the Qur'an would appear "silent" in the face of new problems. This method serves as a means of interpretive de-radicalization as well as an instrument of progressive ijtihad in responding to the challenges of the times.

The *mauḍū'ī* approach to Qur'anic economic interpretation can be affirmed as a robust epistemological and methodological framework for articulating an integrative and ethically grounded economic system. By synthesizing dispersed Qur'anic principles into a coherent paradigm, it not only challenges the reductionist tendencies of conventional economic models but also offers a normative vision rooted in justice, balance, and collective welfare. This approach highlights that Islamic economics is not merely a set of legal injunctions, but a comprehensive moral economy that prioritizes social equity, community empowerment, and sustainable development. Consequently, the thematic interpretation of economic verses in the Qur'an provides both a critical alternative and a constructive contribution to contemporary economic discourse, enabling the formulation of policies and practices that are not only economically viable but also spiritually and socially transformative (Kurniawan & Pulungan, 2025; Rajasyah et al., 2025).

The development of modern reproductive technologies such as In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), genetic engineering, and contraception presents ethical challenges that demand normative responses from Qur'anic interpretation. Such dynamics require a more contextual study of the Qur'an, tailored to the needs. Therefore, a thematic study of the Qur'an based on the principles of *mauḍū'ī* interpretation addresses this need. As found in Surah Al-Mu'minun, verses 12-14, it describes the stages of human creation that align with modern embryology. The map of the verses of human creation in the Qur'an includes the stages of *nutfah, 'alāqah, muḍghah*, and the formation of bones and flesh, which are spread across various surahs. These findings confirm that IVF is acceptable as long as it does not violate the principle of lineage, genetic engineering is permissible for therapeutic purposes oriented towards benefits, and contraception is seen as responsible reproductive planning. This study also found a paradigm shift in interpretation from textual-descriptive to contextual-reflective as the basis for modern reproductive ethics (Abdullah et al., 2026).

2.3. Scholars Who Support and Develop the *Mauḍū'ī* Interpretation Method

The popularity of *mauḍu'ī* tafsir in the modern era is inseparable from the role of a number of scholars who responded to the needs of the times through a thematic approach. The main figure considered to have formulated the *mauḍū'ī* tafsir methodology is ʿAbd al-Hayy al-Farmawī, through his work *Al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'ī* (1977), who formulated systematic methodological steps (Al-Farmawi, 1977). Muhammad al-Ghazali, through *Naḥwa Tafsīr Mauḍū'ī li Suwar al-Qur'ān*, introduces the concept of *al-waḥdah al-mauḍū'iyyah li al-sūrah* (thematic unity of the surah), arguing that each surah has a central theme. Meanwhile, Fazlur Rahman (1980) in Major Themes of the Qur'an developed a thematic approach that identifies key concepts such as God, humanity, and eschatology holistically. In Indonesia, M. Quraish Shihab played an important role in popularizing *mauḍū'ī* interpretation through his work Insights of the Qur'an: *Mauḍū'i* Interpretation of Various Problems of the Ummah (Shihab, 2013). Three important layers of development can be identified:

a. Ideological Foundation Laying (Cairo School): Amin al-Khuli and his student Aisyah Abdurrahman (Bint al-Syati') called for a *dirāsah adabiyyah* approach that emphasized thematic unity.

b. Methodological Formulator: al-Farmawī formulated seven steps of thematic interpretation: theme selection, verse collection, chronological arrangement, *munāsabah* analysis, sub-theme classification, in-depth analysis, and synthesis of results.
c. Productive Practitioner: Yusuf al-Qardhawi applied this approach in *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyāt*, while Fazlur Rahman (presented it in a Western academic context.

The evolution of *mauḍū'ī* tafsir can be understood as a cumulative intellectual process that integrates ideological foundations, methodological rigor, and practical application within contemporary Qur'anic studies. The contributions of key scholars demonstrate that this approach is not merely a modern innovation, but a structured and dynamic response to the need for a more coherent, contextual, and problem-oriented understanding of the Qur'an. By bridging classical exegetical traditions with modern intellectual demands, *mauḍū'ī* interpretation establishes itself as a vital paradigm that enhances the relevance of the Qur'an in addressing complex socio-cultural, ethical, and global issues. Consequently, its continued development reflects an ongoing effort to position the Qur'an not only as a sacred text, but also as a living source of guidance capable of informing contemporary discourse through systematic, integrative, and thematic analysis.

2.4. The Fundamental Difference between Maudhu'ī and Muqāran Tafsir

As a complement, it is important to make a clear distinction between Maudū'ī (Thematic) and Muqāran (Comparative) Tafsir, as both are often misunderstood despite their fundamental differences. Maudū'ī Tafsir, as described above, focuses on a specific theme or concept (maudu'), such as "justice," "environment," or "leadership." This approach is problem-oriented, in which the researcher compiles all the verses of the Qur'an from various surahs relevant to the topic. The goal is to synthesize them to construct a complete and holistic Qur'anic worldview (weltanschauung) regarding a specific issue.

Apart from that, the *mauḍū'i* Tafsir Method (Thematic) can be said to be a method of interpretation that tries to find answers to the Al-Qur'an about a problem by collecting verses related to it, as well as analyzing through auxiliary sciences that are relevant to the problems discussed, so that it can produce complete concepts from the Al-Qur'an about various problems (A. Putri et al., 2024). From an epistemological perspective, *mauḍū'ī* (thematic) tafsir constitutes an integrative interpretive approach. It systematically interrelates Qur'anic verses through intertextual analysis, bridges the relationship between the text and its socio-historical context, and connects revelation with insights from contemporary disciplines. As such, this model of interpretation functions as a crucial methodological tool for advancing Islamic thought that is both contextually grounded and transformative in responding to modern intellectual and social challenges (Fadli, 2025).

In contrast, *Muqāran* (Comparative) Tafsir does not focus on a theme, but rather on comparing the views of the commentators *(aqwāl al-mufassirīn)* on a single verse or series of verses. The primary object of study in the *muqāran* method is the tafsir books themselves. A researcher will take a single verse or passage and then analyze how different commentators (e.g., from different schools of thought, eras, or styles) interpret it. The goal is to map the spectrum of *ikhtilāf* (differences of opinion), understand the methodological assumptions behind each view, and sometimes conclude with a *tarjīḥ* (choose the opinion that is considered the strongest). From a characteristic standpoint, *muqāran* (comparative) tafsir provides a broad and diverse understanding, as it enables readers to engage with multiple perspectives and differing interpretations of a given Qur'anic verse. By analyzing these varied viewpoints, this approach fosters an attitude of intellectual openness and tolerance. Moreover, *muqāran* tafsir encourages critical engagement with the Qur'an, as readers are exposed to contrasting arguments, allowing them to examine the underlying logic and *ijtihād* of different exegetes. Consequently, this method is particularly well-suited for academic and scholarly inquiry, as it facilitates the examination of a verse or theme from multiple perspectives, thereby enhancing analytical depth and promoting a more objective understanding (Wigati & Pramuja, 2024).

In summary, the distinction between *maudū'ī* (thematic) and *muqāran* (comparative) tafsir reflects two complementary yet fundamentally different methodological orientations within Qur'anic studies. The *maudū'ī* approach is integrative and problem-oriented, aiming to construct a holistic Qur'anic worldview by synthesizing relevant verses across surahs and engaging them with socio-historical contexts and contemporary disciplines, thereby offering a contextual and transformative framework for addressing modern issues. In contrast, the *muqāran* method is analytical and comparative, focusing on examining the diversity of exegetical opinions on specific verses, mapping scholarly disagreements (*ikhtilāf*), and evaluating the reasoning and *ijtihād* behind them. While *maudū'ī* tafsir emphasizes conceptual coherence and applicability, *muqāran* tafsir highlights intellectual plurality, critical inquiry, and methodological rigor. Together, these approaches enrich Qur'anic interpretation by balancing thematic

synthesis with comparative analysis, thus contributing to both the development of applied Islamic thought and the advancement of academic scholarship. The difference between these two methods lies in their focus, object of study, and ultimate goal. Maudhu'ī exegesis is thematically oriented, compiling verses from various suras to construct a comprehensive Qur'anic view. In contrast, muqāran exegesis is comparative, comparing the views of commentators from various schools of thought and periods (Arib & Mokodenseho, 2023).

Distinguishing Aspects	**Maudhu'ī Interpretation (Thematic)**	**Comparative Interpretation of Muqāran**
Study Object	Verses of the Quran spread out in one theme	Interpretation products (interpreter's opinions)
Key Questions	"What is the complete view of the Qur'an on theme X?"	"What are the differences in the views of the commentators regarding verse Y?"
Starting Point	From the issue/theme (eg: social justice)	From specific texts (e.g. Q.S. al-Fātiḥah: 4)
Core Process	Constructively collect, analyze, and synthesize related verses	Comparative comparing the views of the interpreters
Final destination	Building a Qur'anic weltanschauung on a particular theme	Assess the background and strength of the interpreter's argument
Nature of Analysis	Hermeneutical-constructive	Historical-analytical
Methodological Risk	Subjectivity and cherry-picking	Relativism atau ta'ashhub madhhabī

Thus, the maudhu'ī interpretation dialogues directly with the text of the Qur'an, while the muqāran interpretation dialogues with the existing interpretation tradition.

2.5. **Why Maudhu'ī's Interpretation is Popular in the Modern Age**

Mauḍū'ī (thematic) interpretation is highly sought after in the modern era due to its ability to provide relevant and direct answers to contemporary problems. Unlike *tahlīlī* interpretation, which interprets verses sequentially, the *mauḍū'ī* method starts from a single theme or current issue facing society, such as modern economics, medical ethics, politics, or human rights. This problem-solving approach is greatly needed by modern humans who seek specific Qur'anic guidance for new challenges not encountered in classical times. Therefore, this method is considered more practical, solution-oriented, and contextual.

Within the epistemological framework of Qur'anic exegesis, *mauḍū'ī* (thematic) tafsir positions revelation as a normative-transcendental source of knowledge that is systematically approached through the scientific instruments of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Among the principal epistemological tools employed are *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *munāsabah al-āyāt wa al-suwar*, and *maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*. *Asbāb al-nuzūl* serves to elucidate the historical and socio-cultural context of revelation, ensuring that thematic interpretation remains grounded in the empirical realities that shaped the verses. *Munāsabah* highlights the structural and semantic coherence between verses and surahs, reinforcing the integrative nature of Qur'anic meaning. Meanwhile, *maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* directs interpretation toward the overarching normative objectives of the Qur'an, such as justice, public welfare (*maṣlaḥah)*, and the moral development of humanity. Together, these epistemological components establish a coherent and methodologically rigorous framework that enables thematic tafsir to produce interpretations that are both contextually grounded and normatively oriented (Maimun & Manshur, 2026).

Mauḍū'ī interpretation can provide enlightenment, that interpretation is not theoretical, but also functional and contextual. The opinion of Nurcahyati and Haqiqi quoted in (Pratama et al., 2026), that *mauḍū'ī* interpretation emphasizes the importance of understanding the Qur'an through the historical conditions when the Qur'an was revealed, before the universal values in the Qur'an were applied to the current context, as this understanding is also discussed in Fazlur Rahman's double movement theory. So from an approach like this, it necessitates a critical dialogue between the text, the initial context, and the context of the reader, all of which form a comprehensive epistemological structure of interpretation.

The main advantage of the *mauḍū'ī* method lies in its holistic approach and its ability to avoid partial understanding of the text. To examine a single topic, this method requires an interpreter to compile all relevant verses from various suras in the Qur'an. Through an integrated analysis of these verses, the interpreter can obtain a complete and balanced picture of the Qur'an's perspective on the topic under study. Thus, this method prevents cherry-picking, or the taking of a single verse in isolation, which could potentially lead to

misunderstandings or extreme interpretations (Az-Zahra, 2022, p. 18). Furthermore, the *mauḍū'ī* (thematic) approach to Qur'anic interpretation demonstrates that the Qur'an should be understood through an integrated epistemological framework, one that synthesizes revelation, reason, and social reality in the process of interpretation (Astutik et al., 2024). Within this Qur'anic epistemology, these elements are not perceived as competing sources of truth, but rather as complementary components that collectively construct a holistic structure of knowledge. Reason functions to expand human capacity in understanding empirical phenomena, while revelation provides the moral and spiritual orientation that guides the responsible application of knowledge. This integration ultimately gives rise to a paradigm of knowledge that is simultaneously rational, transcendent, and grounded in divine values.(Solikhin et al., 2025).

From a methodological perspective, *mauḍu'ī* interpretation also aligns with the scientific spirit upheld in modern research traditions. The process is systematic: starting with defining a problem or theme, collecting data in the form of related verses and hadith, analyzing the historical context (asbab al-nuzūl), and then conceptually synthesizing it to formulate a "Quranic theory" of the theme. This logical and structured workflow makes the *mauḍu'ī* method academically acceptable to modern intellectuals accustomed to data-driven, rational scientific work patterns. Furthermore, *mauḍū'ī* (thematic) tafsir reinforces the principle of *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān*, namely interpreting one verse through other relevant verses. This principle provides strong scholarly legitimacy, as it establishes the Qur'an itself as the primary reference for understanding its meanings. Consequently, *mauḍū'ī* tafsir is regarded as possessing a high degree of epistemic authority within the Islamic exegetical tradition. In addition, this approach opens significant space for interdisciplinary engagement in Qur'anic studies. It facilitates a constructive dialogue between the revealed text and modern disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, law, and environmental studies, while remaining grounded in the established principles of *'ulūm al-tafsīr*. A growing body of scholarly research indicates that the thematic approach serves as a crucial gateway for developing Qur'anic studies that are both applicative and transformative in addressing contemporary issues (Maimun & Manshur, 2026).

Ultimately, the *mauḍū'ī* interpretation functions as a bridge that affirms the eternal relevance of the Qur'an *(ṣaliḥ li kulli zamān wa makān).* This method shows that the Qur'an is not a static text, but rather a source of guidance that is dynamic and adaptive to the realities of the times. Figures such Al-Farmawī, who formulated his methodology systematically, and M. Quraish Shihab, who popularized it in Indonesia through Wawasan Al-Qur'an, succeeded in showing that this thematic approach is able to present the guidance of the Qur'an functionally in the midst of modern society. Apart from methodological factors, the popularity of maudhu'ī interpretation in the modern era can also be explained through the following three main aspects:

a. Practical Relevance. The modern world is structured thematically and pragmatically. Maudhu'ī interpretation addresses society's need for direct guidance from the Qur'an on specific, emerging issues.
b. Academic Needs (Interdisciplinarity). The thematic approach bridges the study of interpretation with science, social sciences, and the humanities. This aligns with the concept of the Islamization of Knowledge proposed by Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, which emphasizes the importance of integrating religious and modern knowledge so that the Qur'an remains a primary source for the development of civilization.
c. Ideological Agenda (Reconstructive). This method is used to reconstruct concepts of Islamic civilization such as justice, democracy, and public ethics as a counterpoint to Western secular discourse. Through the maudhu'ī approach, Qur'anic values can be articulated contextually and presented within a communicative framework within a contemporary paradigm.

In summary, *mauḍū'ī* (thematic) tafsir emerges as a highly relevant and methodologically robust approach in contemporary Qur'anic studies due to its problem-oriented, holistic, and interdisciplinary character. By shifting from a sequential reading of verses to a thematic synthesis grounded in real-world issues, this method enables the Qur'an to function as a dynamic source of guidance capable of addressing modern challenges. Epistemologically, it integrates revelation, reason, and social reality within a coherent framework supported by the tools of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, such as *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *munāsabah*, and *maqāṣid al-Qur'ān*, thereby ensuring both contextual grounding and normative direction. Its systematic and scientific procedure aligns with modern research paradigms, while its commitment to *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān* reinforces its internal coherence and epistemic authority. Furthermore, its openness to interdisciplinary dialogue allows for the development of applicative and transformative interpretations that bridge classical Islamic knowledge with contemporary sciences. Ultimately, *mauḍū'ī* tafsir not only affirms the timeless relevance of the Qur'an (*ṣāliḥ li kulli zamān wa makān*), but also serves as an

epistemological strategy for reconstructing Islamic thought and contributing meaningfully to the ethical, intellectual, and civilizational challenges of the modern world.

3. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the emergence and popularity of the *mauḍū'ī* method of interpretation is a historical and epistemological necessity in the development of modern Qur'anic exegesis studies. This method emerged as a response to two main issues: first, the limitations of *tahlīlī* interpretation, which tends to be fragmented and less able to address the multidimensional problems of the community; second, the demands of the modern era that require a more contextual, comprehensive, and applicable approach to interpretation. Through a thematic approach, *mauḍū'ī* exegesis facilitates a more comprehensive interpretation by compiling all verses related to a theme, analyzing them in an integrated manner, and synthesizing the Qur'an's worldview (weltanschauung) on a particular issue. In this way, *mauḍū'ī* exegesis functions not only as an academic instrument but also as a means of progressive ijtihad that reconciles the revealed text with contemporary reality. The urgency of this method is evident in its ability to address modern humanitarian problems, such as the ecological crisis, economic inequality, bioethical issues, and text-based radicalism. The *mauḍū'ī* approach offers a more holistic, rational, and solution-oriented reading of the Quran, thus serving as a medium for interpretive deradicalization and strengthening universal humanitarian values in Islam. Furthermore, this study found that the appeal of *mauḍū'ī* interpretation in the modern era is influenced by three main factors: its practical relevance in addressing societal issues, its interdisciplinary character linking religion with modern science, and its ideological function in reconstructing Islamic civilization amidst the dominance of secular discourse. Figures such as Al-Farmawī, Fazlur Rahman, Yusuf al-Qardhawi, and M. Quraish Shihab represent the intellectual evolution of this method at the global and national levels. Thus, *mauḍū'ī* interpretation occupies a strategic position in the dynamics of modern Islamic thought. It is not merely an interpretive method, but also a new paradigm for understanding the Qur'an as a book of guidance (*hudan li al-nās*) that is always relevant and capable of providing solutions to the complexity of human problems across time and space.

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