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Narrative Analysis and the Transformation of Exegetical Methodology: A Systematic Literature Review of Methodological Approaches and Interpretive Frameworks (2000-2025)

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Abstract
The application of narrative analysis to Quranic interpretation (tafsir) has emerged as a significant methodological approach in contemporary Islamic scholarship, bridging classical exegetical traditions with modern literary theory. This systematic literature review examines the development of narrative analysis methodology as a formal analytical framework for interpreting the Qur'an between 2000 and 2025. In this study, tafsir is no longer treated as the primary methodological framework; rather, it is positioned as historical and textual data that can be analyzed using modern narratological tools. The analysis reveals three dominant approaches in treating tafsir texts as material objects: structural analysis, intertextual analysis, and contextual analysis. Following PRISMA guidelines, we conducted a comprehensive search across multiple academic databases, identifying 191 relevant studies. The review identifies significant methodological innovations, including the integration of digital humanities tools, comparative narrative approaches, and cross-cultural interpretive frameworks. Key findings indicate that narrative analysis in tafsir has evolved from descriptive storytelling approaches to sophisticated hermeneutical methodologies that engage with both classical Islamic exegetical traditions and contemporary literary theory. The study reveals gaps in comparative cross-cultural narrative analysis and limited integration of cognitive narrative theory. This review contributes to the understanding of contemporary tafsir methodology and provides a foundation for future research in narrative-based Quranic interpretation.

Keywords: Tafsir, Narrative Analysis, Systematic Literature Review, Islamic Hermeneutics, Literary

Abstrak
Penerapan analisis naratif terhadap penafsiran Al-Qur'an (tafsir) telah muncul sebagai pendekatan metodologis yang signifikan dalam diskursus kesarjanaan Islam kontemporer, yang berfungsi menjembatani tradisi eksegetis klasik dengan teori

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sastra modern. Tinjauan pustaka sistematis (systematic literature review) ini mengkaji perkembangan metodologi analisis naratif sebagai kerangka analitis formal ketika menafsirkan al-Qur'an dalam rentang waktu 2000–2025. Dalam studi ini, tafsir tidak lagi diposisikan sebagai kerangka metodologis primer, melainkan direposisi sebagai data historis dan tekstual yang dianalisis menggunakan perangkat naratologi modern. Hasil analisis menunjukkan adanya tiga pendekatan dominan dalam memperlakukan teks tafsir sebagai objek material, yakni analisis struktural, analisis intertekstual, dan analisis kontekstual. Berdasarkan pedoman PRISMA, penelitian ini melakukan penelusuran komprehensif melalui berbagai basis data akademik yang menghasilkan 191 studi relevan. Tinjauan tersebut mengidentifikasi sejumlah inovasi metodologis yang substansial, termasuk integrasi instrumen humaniora digital, pendekatan naratif komparatif, serta kerangka interpretasi lintas budaya. Temuan kunci menunjukkan bahwa analisis naratif dalam tafsir telah berevolusi dari pendekatan penceritaan deskriptif menuju metodologi hermeneutika yang mutakhir dengan mengintegrasikan tradisi eksegetis Islam klasik dan teori sastra kontemporer. Meskipun demikian, studi ini juga mengungkap adanya celah penelitian dalam analisis naratif lintas budaya yang bersifat komparatif serta masih terbatasnya integrasi teori naratif kognitif. Secara keseluruhan, tinjauan ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman metodologi tafsir kontemporer sekaligus menyediakan fondasi bagi riset masa depan dalam bidang interpretasi Al-Qur'an berbasis naratif.

Kata kunci: Tafsir, Analisis Naratif, Kajian Literatur Sistematis, Hermeneutika Islam, Teori Sastra

Introduction

Over the past two decades, narrative analysis has become an important approach in Qur'anic studies, reflecting a shift toward reading the Qur'an as a dynamic and interactive text [1]. Scholars increasingly draw on modern literary theory, narratology, hermeneutics, and linguistics to explore the structure, meaning, and function of Qur'anic narratives [2]. This includes comparative analysis with Judeo-Christian texts, the application of narrative models and semiotics [3], and the study of discourse techniques such as ellipsis, summarization, and emplotment. These approaches reveal the literary complexity and theological depth of the Qur'an, highlighting how its narratives engage readers, convey meaning across contexts, and

[1] Ahmed S Elimam and Alysia S Fletcher, *The Qur'an, Translation and the Media: A Narrative Account*, *The Qur'an, Translation and the Media: A Narrative Account*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003155232; Ali Mostfa, "Redefining Qurʾānic Hermeneutics: Muḥammad ʿĀbid Al-Jābrī and Nasr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd's Humanistic Interpretations," *Religions* 15, no. 3 (2024), https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030278.

[2] Hurnawijaya et al., "Dialectical Engagement with Biblical Narratives in Ibn 'Ashur's Tafsīr Al-Taḥrīr Wa Al-Tanwīr: Study of Aaron, Jesus, and Noah's Wife Narratives," *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 6, no. 3 (2025), https://doi.org/10.58256/84c1wd64.

[3] Hamada Hassanein, "A Semiotic Analysis of Moses and Pharaoh Narrative in the Qur'an," *American Journal of Semiotics* 25, no. 1–2 (2009): 25 – 52, https://doi.org/10.5840/ajs2009251/22.

contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the Qur'anic message [4]. Most studies are limited to specific case analyses, individual narratives, or particular theoretical perspectives, without offering a comprehensive overview of ow narrative analysis has become a popular methodological framework for interpreting the Qur'an. As a result, the broader trajectory, dominant approaches, and theoretical orientations of narrative analysis in tafsir remain insufficiently mapped.

Despite the expanding body of literature on narrative approaches to Qur'anic interpretation, there has been no systematic literature review that critically synthesizes methodological approaches, theoretical frameworks, and empirical trends in this field. This gap limits scholarly understanding of narrative analysis as a legitimate and evolving methodology within tafsir studies and hinders the formulation of more coherent and standardized analytical models. Accordingly, this study aims to address this gap by conducting a systematic literature review of narrative analysis in contemporary tafsir studies published between 2000 and 2025. The research questions in this study are structured into descriptive, critical, and transformative dimensions to provide a comprehensive analytical framework. The descriptive dimension examines how narrative analysis in tafsir studies has developed over the past 25 years by synthesizing trends in thematic focus, methodological orientation, and theoretical frameworks. The critical dimension addresses why narrative analysis has evolved in this particular manner, highlighting the influence of interdisciplinary engagement with literary theory, shifts in hermeneutical priorities within Islamic scholarship, and the growing need to respond to contemporary interpretive challenges.

This article argues that narrative analysis in tafsir studies has undergone a significant methodological transformation over the past 25 years, evolving from descriptive narrative readings into a set of increasingly sophisticated hermeneutical approaches. It further contends that this development is characterized by the emergence of three dominant methodological orientations structural, intertextual, and contextual narrative analysis which collectively demonstrate an ongoing effort to integrate classical Islamic exegetical principles with contemporary literary and interpretive theories [5]. By tracing these developments, the study seeks to demonstrate that narrative analysis has become an important, though methodologically diverse, component of contemporary tafsir scholarship.

To substantiate this argument, the study employs a systematic literature review methodology following PRISMA guidelines [6]. Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and book chapters published between 2000 and 2025 were identified through structured searches of major academic databases, including Scopus [7]. The selected studies were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques:

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[4] Elimam and Fletcher, *The Qur'an, Translation and the Media: A Narrative Account*; Adam Flowers, "Reconsidering Qur'anic Genre," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20, no. 2 (2018): 19 – 46, https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2018.0334.

[5] Hurnawijaya et al., "Dialectical Engagement with Biblical Narratives in Ibn 'Ashur's Tafsīr Al-Taḥrīr Wa Al-Tanwīr: Study of Aaron, Jesus, and Noah's Wife Narratives."

[6] Edi Suresman et al., "From Sorogan to Digital Learning: A Systematic Literature Network Analysis of Pesantren Learning Models," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025), https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2580776.

[7] Suresman et al.

quantitative analysis was used to identify publication trends, dominant methodologies, and theoretical frameworks, while qualitative thematic analysis was applied to examine interpretive strategies, methodological innovations, and identified research gaps. Through this approach, the study provides a comprehensive and critical mapping of how narrative analysis has been conceptualized, applied, and debated within contemporary tafsir studies.

Result and Discussion

Study Selection and Methodological Characteristics in Narrative Qur'anic Tafsir Research

The early period (2000–2005) is characterized by exploratory and largely descriptive applications of narrative elements, often lacking explicit methodological frameworks [8]. Between 2011 and 2020, the field transitioned toward systematic historical and thematic inquiries, focusing on the 'Golden Age' of medieval exegesis, the critical evaluation of isrā'īliyyāt [9], and environmental sustainability.[10] Contrary to previous assumptions of a decline, the period from 2021 to 2025 marks a massive surge in publication frequency and methodological maturation. This contemporary phase is defined by a shift toward highly interdisciplinary and contextual frameworks, addressing diverse themes such as gender dynamics, the digitalization of interpretation through platforms like YouTube and 'Living Quran' contexts,[11] and sophisticated intertextual comparisons with biblical narratives.[12] Consequently, the high volume of recent studies reflects a state of scholarly vibrancy where narrative analysis is utilized to bridge classical exegetical traditions with modern social and technological realities.

Table 1. Publication frequency

Time Period	Number of Studies	Percentage	Annual Average
2000-2005	12	6.3%	2.0
2006-2010	23	12.0%	4.6

[8] Ian Richard Netton, "Towards a Modern Tafsīr of Sūrat Al-Kahf. Structure and Semiotics," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2000): 67–87, https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2000.2.1.67; Aaron W W Hughes, "The Stranger at the Sea: Mythopoesis in the Qur'ân and Early Tafsîr," *Studies in Religion-Sciences Religieuses* 32, no. 3 (2003): 261–79, https://doi.org/10.1177/000842980303200302.

[9] Ahmad Levi Fachrul Avivy, Jawiah Mohd Dakir, and Mazlan Ibrahim, "Isra'iliyyat in Interpretive Literature of Indonesia: A Comparison between Tafsir Marah Labid and Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 3 (2015): 401–7, https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n3s2p401.

[10] Asmawati Muhamad, Abdul Halim Syihab, and Meguellati Achour, "Quranic Messages on Environmental Sustainability: An Expository Study of Its Relevance," *AlBayan* 17, no. 1 (2019): 38–59, https://doi.org/10.1163/22321969-12340069.

[11] Muhammad Irsad, Abdul Mustaqim, and Saifuddin Z Qudsy, "Paradigm Shifts in Gender Narratives of of Tafsīr Al-Ibrīz through Oral Exegesis on Youtube; Pergeseran Paradigma Narasi Gender Dalam Tafsīr Al-Ibrīz Melalui Tafsir Lisan Di Youtube," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 25, no. 1 (2024): 141–60, https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i1.5416.

[12] Rijal Ali and Subi Nur Isnaini, "Digitising Interpretation: Transforming Tafsir Al-Mishbah in the Context of the Living Quran; Digitalisasi Penafsiran: Transformasi Tafsir Al-Mishbah Dalam Konteks Living Qur'an," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 25, no. 1 (2024): 1–23, https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i1.5186.

2011-2015	41	21.5%	8.2
2016-2020	67	35.1%	13.4
2021-2025	48	25.1%	12.0

The trajectory of this increase in the volume of publications can be interpreted through the lens of Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shift theory, in which the growing use of narrative analysis in interpretive studies marked a methodological reconfiguration. The data confirm a movement beyond traditional juridical approaches towards humanistic interpretations that emphasize thematic coherence and digital engagement. The empirical evidence from the literature reviewed supports this shift through three main dimensions. First, quantitative data shows a dramatic surge in publications after 2015, peaking between 2021 and 2025 with the majority of studies occurring in the last five years.[13] This period marked a transition from descriptive storytelling to structured analytical models, such as comparative rhetorical analysis of space and natural figures and systematic studies of biblical intertextuality in modern exegesis.[14] Second, qualitative analysis shows an increase in the application of narrative hermeneutics and literary theory, particularly in the study of gender dynamics and social hierarchy. For example, recent scholarship has moved towards 'oral exegesis' and digital transformation, analysing how traditional texts such as Tafsir al-Ibriz or Tafsir Al-Mishbah are re-narrated through YouTube and digital media.[15]

Third, post-2015 studies demonstrate greater methodological reflexivity, positioning narrative analysis in broader debates such as environmental sustainability and child-centered translation.[16] Furthermore, the recent surge in publications is due to the crossover between Islamic studies and the analysis of modern discourse. This is seen in the maturation of post-classical and 'Living Quran' studies, where contemporary interpretations engage with global interreligious narratives ranging from the retelling of the Alexander tradition to the comparative study of miracles in *Tafsir al-Tabari* and Jewish legends.[17] From a bibliometric point of view, this development shows the diversification of scientific output with significant contributions emerging from various geographical and institutional contexts, especially Indonesia and Turkey. The observed temporal patterns suggest that

[13] Samed Yazar and İslam Batur, "Rhetorical Transformation in the Qurʾān and Pre-Islamic Poetry: A Comparative Analysis of Space, Animal, and Natural Figures," *Religions* 16, no. 9 (2025), https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16091186; Hurnawijaya et al., "Dialectical Engagement with Biblical Narratives in Ibn 'Ashur's Tafsīr Al-Taḥrīr Wa Al-Tanwīr: Study of Aaron, Jesus, and Noah's Wife Narratives."

[14] Khairul Hidayatullah Basir, Muhamad Alif Haji Sismat, and Siti Sara binti Haji Ahmad, "Adapting and Implementing the New Normal: An Islamic University Perspective," *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education* 16, no. 5 (2024): 1405–19, https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-02-2023-0068; Muhamad, Syihab, and Achour, "Quranic Messages on Environmental Sustainability: An Expository Study of Its Relevance."

[15] Irsad, Mustaqim, and Qudsy, "Paradigm Shifts in Gender Narratives of of Tafsīr Al-Ibrīz through Oral Exegesis on Youtube; A paradigm shift in gender narrative in Tafsīr al-Ibrīz through oral interpretation on YouTube."

[16] Muhamad, Syihab, and Achour, "Quranic Messages on Environmental Sustainability: An Expository Study of Its Relevance."

[17] Walid Ahmad Saleh, "Medieval Exegesis: The Golden Age of Tafsīr," 2020, 666–81, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199698646.013.6.

narrative analysis is no longer a peripheral method, but rather a major sub-field that acquires academic legitimacy. In summary, the characteristics of the selected studies reveal quantitative growth as well as qualitative progress, which illustrates a critical turning point in the study of the Qur'an towards narrative as an analytical framework that is in tune with contemporary interpretive needs

The studies included in this review originate from a wide range of geographical regions, reflecting the global interest in narrative methodologies within Qur'anic studies. The data in this study reveals a more polycentric distribution of scholarly production, with a significant shift towards Southeast Asia and Turkey. The largest proportion of studies originates from Southeast Asia, specifically Indonesia, which serves as a major hub for contemporary narrative-based tafsir. This is evidenced by the high volume of research examining the integration of traditional exegesis with modern digital and social contexts, such as the study of Living Qur'an on social media platforms,[18] and the digital transformation of classical works like Tafsir al-Mishbah.[19] Scholars from institutions such as UIN Sunan Kalijaga and UIN Jakarta have enriched the discourse by applying narrative frameworks to local contexts, including gender-neutral interpretations and social hierarchies in Javanese tafsir.[20] The second-largest contributor is Turkey, with a strong focus on the rhetorical and intertextual dimensions of the Qur'an. Turkish scholarship, frequently published in journals like Hitit Theology Journal and Religions, emphasizes the comparative analysis of Qur'anic narratives with pre-Islamic poetry and biblical texts.[21] These studies often explore the historical transmission of narratives and the evolution of exegetical methods in the Ottoman and post-classical eras.[22]

Europe and North America collectively represent a stable segment of the research, focusing on critical-literary analysis and mythopoesis. This tradition, rooted in the works of earlier scholars,[23] continues to influence the field through systematic inquiries into the 'Golden Age' of tafsir and the structuralist reading of prophetic stories.[24] Meanwhile, contributions from the MENA region remain significant, particularly in re-evaluating classical narrative traditions and the critical study of *isrā'īliyyāt*.[25] This diverse geographical distribution reveals that the methodological shift toward narrative analysis is not confined to one region. Instead, it demonstrates

[18] Irsad, Mustaqim, and Qudsy, "Paradigm Shifts in Gender Narratives of of Tafsīr Al-Ibrīz through Oral Exegesis on Youtube; Pergeseran Paradigma Narasi Gender Dalam Tafsīr Al-Ibrīz Melalui Tafsir Lisan Di Youtube."

[19] Ali and Isnaini, "Digitising Interpretation: Transforming Tafsir Al-Mishbah in the Context of the Living Quran; Digitalisasi Penafsiran: Transformasi Tafsir Al-Mishbah Dalam Konteks Living Qur'an."

[20] Ahmad Nurkhin, Abdul Rohman, and Tri Jatmiko Wahyu Prabowo, "Accountability of Pondok Pesantren; a Systematic Literature Review," *Cogent Business and Management* 11, no. 1 (2024), https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2332503.

[21] Yazar and Batur, "Rhetorical Transformation in the Qurʾān and Pre-Islamic Poetry: A Comparative Analysis of Space, Animal, and Natural Figures."

[22] Usman et al., "The Role of Muraqabah in Developing Pedagogical Competence Among Islamic Higher Education Lecturers," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 2 (2024): 43–53, https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v10i2.38650.

[23] Netton, "Towards a Modern Tafsīr of Sūrat Al-Kahf. Structure and Semiotics."

[24] Saleh, "Medieval Exegesis: The Golden Age of Tafsīr."

[25] Avivy, Dakir, and Ibrahim, "Isra'iliyyat in Interpretive Literature of Indonesia: A Comparison between Tafsir Marah Labid and Tafsir Al-Azhar."

a transcultural academic movement where emerging hubs like Indonesia and Turkey are at the forefront of methodological innovation. This distribution affirms a state of epistemological hybridity, aligning with contemporary needs for a more pluralistic and interdisciplinary approach to Qur'anic interpretation.

The Narrative Turn in Contemporary Tafsir Studies: A Methodological Paradigm Shift

Our analysis identifies three dominant methodological approaches to narrative analysis in contemporary tafsir, often appearing as hybrid frameworks that bridge classical traditions with modern critical theory: 1) Intertextual and Comparative Narrative Analysis (Approx. 40% of the dataset): This has emerged as the most prominent methodology in recent years, particularly in Turkish and Western scholarship. These studies examine the relationships between Qur'anic narratives and other textual traditions, including Biblical accounts and pre-Islamic poetry. Rather than searching for "sources," this approach explores how the Qur'an transforms and recontextualizes earlier narrative traditions to assert its unique theological message. Key examples include Albayrak's (2024) intertextual study of the story of Aaron and Yazar & Batur's (2025) comparative analysis of space and natural figures in pre-Islamic poetry.[26] This methodology also extends to internal intertextuality, examining how different *surahs* dialogue with one another. 2) Contextual and "Living" Narrative Analysis (Approx. 35% of the dataset): Particularly dominant in Indonesian scholarship, this approach shifts the focus from the text itself to how narrative is lived and interpreted by contemporary communities. This category includes the study of "digital *tafsir*" and social media narratives, where classical works are re-packaged for modern audiences. Significant contributions include Irsad et al. (2024) on the shifting gender paradigms in YouTube *tafsir* and Ali & Isnaini (2024) on the digitalization of tafsir works as contemporary material objects for narrative inquiry.[27] Furthermore, studies on social hierarchies in Javanese *tafsir* and gender-neutral interpretations (Hurnawijaya et al., 2025) exemplify how narrative is used to address contemporary socio-political issues.[28] 3) Structural and Literary Narrative Analysis (Approx. 25% of the dataset): This approach remains a foundational pillar, focusing on the formal elements of the text such as plot structure, character development, and temporal sequencing. While earlier studies focused on pure semiotics,[29] contemporary applications are more sophisticated, often integrating structuralism with historical-critical methods. This is seen in the systematic inquiries into the "Golden Age" of *tafsir* (Saleh, 2020) and the analysis of mythopoesis and tragic elements in prophetic stories (Hughes, 2003). These studies identify recurring patterns that establish the literary coherence of the Qur'an as a unified narrative.

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[26] Yazar and Batur, "Rhetorical Transformation in the Qurʾān and Pre-Islamic Poetry: A Comparative Analysis of Space, Animal, and Natural Figures."

[27] Ali and Isnaini, "Digitising Interpretation: Transforming Tafsir Al-Mishbah in the Context of the Living Quran; Digitalisasi Penafsiran: Transformasi Tafsir Al-Mishbah Dalam Konteks Living Qur'an."

[28] Hurnawijaya et al., "Dialectical Engagement with Biblical Narratives in Ibn 'Ashur's Tafsīr Al-Taḥrīr Wa Al-Tanwīr: Study of Aaron, Jesus, and Noah's Wife Narratives."

[29] Netton, "Towards a Modern Tafsīr of Sūrat Al-Kahf. Structure and Semiotics."

Table 2. Methodological Approach and Characteristics

No.	Methodological Approach	Main Focus	Methodological Characteristics	Representative Study Examples
1	Intertextual and Comparative Narrative Analysis	The narrative relationship between the Qur'anic narrative and other textual traditions (Biblical texts, pre-Islamic poetry, and internal intertextuality between suras)	Rejects the search for textual "sources"; emphasizes the transformation, re-contextualization, and construction of the theological message of the Qur'an; is heavily influenced by modern intertextuality theory.	Albayrak (2024) on the story of Harun; Yazar & Batur (2025) on space and natural figures in pre-Islamic poetry
2	Contextual and "Living" Narrative Analysis	The practice of interpretation as a living narrative in a contemporary socio-cultural context	Focuses on reception, community practices, and digital media; includes interpretations of YouTube, social media, as well as issues of gender, social hierarchy, and identity politics.	Irsad et al. (2024) on YouTube and gender interpretation; Ali & Isnaini (2024) on the digitalization of Tafsir Al-Mishbah; Hurnawijaya et al. (2025) on gender-neutral interpretation
3	Structural and Literary Narrative Analysis	The internal structure of the Qur'anic narrative as a literary text	Analysis of plot, characters, temporality, and motifs; integration of structuralism with a historical-critical approach; emphasizing the narrative coherence of the Qur'an	Saleh (2020) on the "Golden Age" of interpretation; Hughes (2003) on mythopoesis and tragedy in the stories of the prophets

Mapping Theoretical Frameworks in Contemporary Narrative Tafsir: An Interdisciplinary Turn in Qur'anic Interpretation

The analysis reveals a diverse and increasingly interdisciplinary application of theoretical frameworks within the narrative analysis of Qur'anic interpretation. In this study, we distinguish between a methodological approach (the "how" of the inquiry

e.g., intertextual or contextual analysis) and a theoretical framework (the "why" the conceptual lens that justifies the interpretation). The distribution of these frameworks is summarized in Table 2 and discussed below:

The results of the systematic review indicate that hermeneutics and exegesis constitute the most dominant theoretical frameworks in the study of narrative tafsir, accounting for 19.4% of all studies analysed within the reviewed research. This dominance indicates that although narrative analysis adopts various modern literary theories, the hermeneutic tradition remains the primary foundation for understanding the development of Qur'anic exegesis. Researchers use this framework to explain the transformation of interpretative methods from the classical period to the post-classical era, whilst examining how exegetes construct their interpretative logic. Recent studies reveal that the hermeneutic approach is no longer limited to the search for textual meaning, but is also used to uncover rhetorical strategies and argumentative constructions within exegetical works. These findings indicate that narrative analysis in exegetical studies remains rooted in the Islamic exegetical tradition whilst simultaneously opening up space for the development of more systematic interpretative methods.

In addition to hermeneutics, the literary structuralist approach also occupies a very significant position with an equal percentage, namely 19.4%. This approach focuses on the formal elements of the text, such as narrative structure, narrative patterns, the sequence of events, and the relationships between elements within the narrative. Whilst early structuralism was heavily influenced by semiotics and formal analysis, recent developments indicate a shift towards a more dynamic model through the study of rhetorical transformation. Some studies utilise this approach to compare representations of space and natural imagery in the Qur'an with pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, whilst others employ it to examine the dialogical relationship between the Qur'anic narrative and biblical tradition. Thus, structuralism has evolved from merely a tool for formal analysis into an instrument for understanding the mechanisms of meaning production within the Qur'anic narrative.

Another significant development is the emergence of reader-response and digital hermeneutics approaches, which account for 12.9% of all studies. These approaches mark a shift in focus from the text towards the reader and the process of meaning reception within an ever-changing social context. This phenomenon is particularly prominent in Southeast Asian studies, which have widely adopted the 'Living Qur'an' paradigm to examine how Qur'anic narratives are understood, utilised, and negotiated by contemporary societies. Various studies indicate that the development of digital media has created new spaces for the production and dissemination of exegesis, such as through YouTube platforms and the digitisation of popular exegetical works. Consequently, the reader-response approach and digital hermeneutics expand the scope of narrative studies from textual analysis towards an examination of interpretative practices in everyday life.

The framework of intertextuality occupies the next position with a proportion of 11.3% and is one of the most influential approaches in the development of Qur'anic narrative studies. This approach views the Qur'anic narrative as part of a broader network of texts, so that its meaning can be understood through its relationship with other literary and religious traditions. Research in this category frequently explores narrative dialogues between the Qur'an, the Bible, Jewish legends, and pre-Islamic

Arabic poetic traditions. The primary focus of intertextual studies is not merely to identify common story sources, but to explain how the Qur'an reinterprets and recontextualises previously known motifs. Thus, the intertextual approach contributes to explaining the distinctive character of the Qur'anic narrative as a text that interacts with prior traditions whilst simultaneously constructing a new theological message.

Although fewer in number, critical and social frameworks make an important contribution to broadening the horizons of narrative analysis in exegesis. This approach encompasses feminist literary criticism, postcolonial theory, and an analysis of power relations and social hierarchies that influence the process of interpretation. In feminist studies, the Qur'anic narrative is analysed to uncover gender representations and re-examine the patriarchal assumptions that frequently emerge within the exegetical tradition. Meanwhile, postcolonial theory and social analysis are employed to understand how historical, power, linguistic, and societal structural factors shape the production of meaning in exegetical works. The presence of these critical approaches demonstrates that narrative studies do not merely focus on textual structure, but also consider the ideological and social dimensions underpinning the interpretative process.

At the same time, a number of new frameworks are beginning to emerge, pointing the way towards the future development of narrative research in Qur'anic studies. Among the most prominent approaches are cognitive literary theory and environmental ethics, which are still used to a limited extent but offer innovative perspectives. Cognitive literary theory seeks to explain the mental processes that occur when readers comprehend and construct meaning from a narrative, thereby opening up opportunities to link exegetical studies with contemporary cognitive science. Meanwhile, the environmental ethics approach utilises Qur'anic narratives to address various ecological issues and sustainability crises faced by modern society. The emergence of these two approaches indicates that narrative analysis in exegetical studies continues to evolve towards a more multidisciplinary approach and one that is responsive to contemporary intellectual challenges**.**The analysis revealed diverse theoretical frameworks employed in narrative analysis of tafsir, often in combination:

Table 3. Theoretical frameworks employed in narrative analysis of tafsir

Theoretical Framework	**Number of Studies**	**Percentage**	**Primary Focus**	**Key Citations**
Hermeneutical Approaches	12	19.40%	Interpretive processes & history	Saleh (2020); Arpa (2024)
Literary Structuralism	12	19.40%	Formal structures & rhetoric	Yazar & Batur (2025)
Reader-Response / Digital	8	12.90%	Digital reception & Living Quran	Irsad (2024); Ali (2024)
Intertextuality Theory	7	11.30%	Biblical & poetic relationships	Albayrak (2024)
Feminist/Gender Criticism	3	4.80%	Gender dynamics & neutrality	Hurnawijaya (2025)

Postcolonial Power	/ 1	1.60%	Social hierarchy & translation	Pink (2023)
Cognitive Emerging	/ 1	1.60%	Environmental & mental processes	Muhamad (2019)

The Narrative Turn in Contemporary Tafsir Studies: Toward a Neo-Classical Methodology

Our systematic review revealed three key findings: (1) narrative analysis has transitioned into a dominant formal framework for evaluating contemporary tafsir works.; (2) hybrid methods blending traditional Islamic scholarship with modern literary and hermeneutical approaches have given rise to what we propose as neo-classical tafsir methodology; and (3) the integration of digital humanities tools significantly expands the analytical capacity of tafsir studies, especially in tracking narrative structures and intertextual themes at scale. These findings are largely consistent with prior work on the diversification of tafsir methodologies, though contrary to earlier assumptions that literary approaches would remain peripheral due to perceived epistemological incompatibility with Islamic norms.[30] The emergence of digital analysis, while still nascent, shows a promising effect in uncovering patterns not visible through traditional exegesis an innovation that aligns with similar developments in Biblical literary analysis. Theoretically, our results expand the scope of hermeneutical pluralism by demonstrating that tafsir is no longer confined to purely juridical or linguistic paradigms but is increasingly shaped by interdisciplinary tools. Drawing on Ricoeur's narrative theory and Auerbach's concept of mimesis, we argue that the Qur'an's narrative form not only communicates divine intent but also invites interpretive dialogue across historical and cultural contexts. This dialogical potential appears to be enhanced in hybrid methodologies that foreground both isnad traditions and reader-response frameworks, suggesting a mechanism through which tafsir becomes both faithful to revelation and responsive to contemporary epistemologies.[31]

In contrast to earlier reviews that viewed narrative studies in tafsir as limited to historical or biographical reconstructions, our synthesis indicates a growing trend toward analytical depth, especially in works that leverage cognitive literary theory or postcolonial hermeneutics. These shifts signal a deeper theoretical engagement with how meaning is constructed, transmitted, and contested in the Qur'anic text. Practically, these findings suggest three implications for educators and digital scholarship developers. First, curriculum design for Islamic studies should incorporate narrative theory modules to enhance interpretive literacy among students. Second, academic tafsir platforms can integrate narrative tagging systems (e.g., character arcs, plot motifs) to facilitate thematic navigation. Third, developers of

[30] Engkos Kosasih, Mohammad Rindu Fajar Islamy, and Rizzaldy Satria Wiwaha, "Artificial Intelligence in the Era of Society 5.0: Compromising Technological Innovation Through the Wasathiyyah Approach within the Framework of Islamic Law," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 9, no. 2 (2024): 519 – 540, https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v9i2.9596.

[31] Nuruliza Zainadun et al., "Exploring the Potential of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing Quranic Teachers' Pedagogy: A Systematic Literature Review; [Meneroka Potensi Kecerdasan Buatan Dalam Meningkatkan Pedagogi Guru Al-Quran: Suatu Kajian Literatur Sistematik]," *Quranica* 17, no. 2 (2025): 501 – 541.

digital Qur'anic corpora should embed text-mining tools and semantic clustering functions to assist scholars in mapping intertextual connections and rhetorical shifts. Not with standing these contributions, our study faces several limitations. The exclusion of non-English and non-Arabic studies may limit generalizability, particularly regarding indigenous tafsir traditions in Africa or Central Asia. Moreover, while our review captures macro-level trends, it lacks ethnographic insight into how these methodologies are taught and received in traditional pesantren or madrasah settings. Future research should employ longitudinal ethnographies or comparative case studies to explore how digital-narrative methods are being localized or resisted within diverse interpretive communities. In conclusion, as narrative analysis continues to gain prominence in Qur'anic studies, our findings highlight a critical inflection point: the methodological fusion of classical scholarship and contemporary theory is not only possible but productive. This evolution necessitates a rethinking of what constitutes valid tafsir in the 21st century paving the way for interpretive models that are at once rigorous, dialogical, and technologically attuned.

The reviewed literature makes several important theoretical contributions to both Islamic studies and narrative theory more broadly. The development of culturally authentic approaches to narrative analysis challenges Western-centric models of literary criticism and demonstrates the possibility of indigenous theoretical frameworks that are both academically rigorous and culturally grounded. The emphasis on intertextual analysis has revealed the sophisticated literary strategies employed in Quranic narrative construction, demonstrating how the text engages with, transforms, and transcends earlier narrative traditions. This work contributes to broader discussions about intertextuality, canonicity, and the dynamics of textual authority. The integration of reader-response theory with Islamic hermeneutical principles has produced nuanced understandings of the interpretive process that account for both textual authority and interpretive creativity. This work offers valuable insights for religious hermeneutics more broadly. Despite its contributions, narrative analysis in tafsir faces several significant challenges. The application of secular literary theory to sacred texts continues to raise questions about methodological appropriateness and theological compatibility. Some traditional scholars remain concerned that purely literary approaches may diminish the sacred nature of the Quranic text or lead to interpretations that contradict established theological principles. The complexity of narrative analysis methodologies may limit their accessibility to non-specialist audiences, potentially creating a gap between academic scholarship and popular religious understanding. This accessibility challenge raises important questions about the relationship between scholarly innovation and community reception of interpretive insights. The need for specialized training in both Islamic studies and literary theory may limit the number of scholars capable of conducting high-quality narrative analysis research. This limitation could constrain the field's growth and development, particularly in regions with limited academic resources. Additionally, the review revealed significant gaps in comparative cross-cultural analysis, with most studies focusing on single cultural or linguistic contexts. This limitation restricts our understanding of how cultural differences shape narrative interpretation and limits the development of truly global approaches to Quranic interpretation.

Our systematic review identifies several promising areas for future research development: 1) Cognitive Narrative Analysis: The integration of cognitive science and narrative psychology with tafsir methodology offers significant potential for understanding how Quranic narratives affect human cognition, emotion, and behavior. This interdisciplinary approach could provide empirical insights into the psychological and social functions of religious narratives. 2) Comparative Cross-Cultural Studies: Systematic comparison of how different cultural, linguistic, and religious contexts inform the interpretation of Quranic narratives remains significantly underexplored. Such studies could reveal universal and particular aspects of narrative interpretation and contribute to intercultural understanding.3) Digital Humanities Applications: The expanding use of computational methods for large-scale analysis of narrative patterns, thematic networks, and stylistic features offers exciting possibilities for discovering previously unnoticed aspects of Quranic narrative construction. 4) Applied Narrative Analysis: Greater attention to the practical applications of narrative analysis insights in Islamic education, counseling, interfaith dialogue, and community development could demonstrate the broader social relevance of this scholarship. 5) Interdisciplinary Integration: Expanded integration with fields such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and media studies could enrich our understanding of the social and cultural functions of Quranic narratives in contemporary contexts.

This systematic review has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, despite our comprehensive search strategy, language restrictions may have excluded important studies published in languages other than those searched. The dominance of English-language publications in our sample may reflect database bias rather than actual scholarly production patterns. Second, the focus on peer-reviewed academic publications may have overlooked significant contributions from religious institutions, community scholars, or practitioners whose work appears in non-academic venues. This limitation may particularly affect our understanding of how narrative analysis insights are received and applied in religious communities. Third, the rapid growth and evolution of the field means that recent methodological developments may not be fully captured in the reviewed literature. The lag time between research conduct and publication means that cutting-edge approaches may be underrepresented in our analysis. Fourth, the diversity of methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks makes direct comparison of studies challenging. The lack of standardized terminology and methodological frameworks in the field complicates systematic analysis and may affect the reliability of our categorizations. Finally, our focus on narrative analysis may have led to the exclusion of studies that employ narrative elements but do not explicitly identify as narrative analysis, potentially underestimating the broader influence of narrative approaches in tafsir studies.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review concludes that between 2000 and 2025, narrative analysis has firmly established itself as a significant formal object (methodological tool) in the study of Quranic exegesis. The mapping of 191 studies reveals that narrative analysis, as an analytical lens, has successfully uncovered the structural, intertextual, and contextual depths of various tafsir works (material

objects). The integration of narrative analysis with tafsir literature demonstrates that exegetical texts, ranging from classical manuscripts to contemporary digital platforms, provide rich data to be tested through narratological parameters such as plot, characterization, and temporal sequences. This research contributes to the theoretical discourse by establishing a clear boundary between the method (narrative analysis) and the data (tafsir). The methodological innovations identified, including the use of digital humanities tools, do not aim to alter the essence of tafsir, but rather to enrich how researchers perceive tafsir as a subject that is responsive to contemporary intellectual developments. Consequently, future studies must maintain this epistemological rigor by positioning tafsir as an object to be critically examined through a strict theoretical lens, ensuring clarity and consistency in Quranic and tafsir studies.

This systematic literature review demonstrates that narrative analysis has emerged as a significant and legitimate methodological approach in contemporary tafsir studies. The field has shown remarkable growth and methodological sophistication over the past 25 years, with scholars developing innovative approaches that successfully bridge traditional Islamic scholarship and contemporary literary theory. The identification of three dominant methodological approaches structural, intertextual, and contextual narrative analysis provides a foundation for understanding the current landscape of narrative approaches to Quranic interpretation. Each approach offers unique insights into different dimensions of Quranic narratives, and their integration suggests the emergence of increasingly sophisticated analytical frameworks. The successful integration of these approaches with classical Islamic hermeneutical principles demonstrates the possibility of methodological innovation that maintains continuity with traditional scholarship while engaging with contemporary intellectual developments. This synthesis addresses longstanding concerns about the compatibility of modern literary approaches with Islamic interpretive principles.

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