

The Development of Qur'anic Thematic Exegesis in Indonesia: Historical Landscape and Shifts of Authority

Perkembangan Tafsir Tematik Al-Qur'an di Indonesia: Lanskap Historis dan Pergeseran Otoritas

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Abstract

Recognizing that thematic Qur'anic interpretation has become the most prominent method in the modern era, this study aims to track its evolution in Indonesia. Despite its popularity in academic contexts, there remains a critical gap in examining its application outside of universities. This study focuses on the shifts in interpretative authority and methodology in thematic Qur'anic exegesis across different sectors, including the state, Islamic boarding schools, universities, and individuals. Using a critical analysis method, the study uncovers several key findings. Firstly, there has been an authoritative shift, where Qur'anic commentators in Indonesia are not limited to traditional *mufassir* but now include scholars from non-religious fields. Secondly, methodological shifts are evident in several aspects: the editorial framing of interpretations, the reduction in the selection of Qur'anic verses used as primary research data, and the emergence of distinct interpretative tendencies. Additionally, there has been a paradigm shift in the relationship between Qur'anic text and social reality, where one approach begins with the Qur'an and leads to an idealistic-normative interpretation, while another starts from social reality and results in an applicative-solutive interpretation. This research fills a crucial academic gap by highlighting the broader changes in thematic exegesis, offering insights into its evolving methodologies and its relevance in addressing contemporary social realities in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Contemporary Indonesia Exegesis; Development of Exegesis; Qur'anic Studies; Thematic Exegesis.*

Abstrak:

Menyadari bahwa tafsir tematik Al-Qur'an telah menjadi metode paling menonjol di era modern, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menelusuri evolusinya di Indonesia. Meskipun popularitasnya tinggi di kalangan akademis, masih ada kesenjangan kritis dalam menelaah penerapannya di luar lingkungan universitas. Studi ini berfokus pada pergeseran otoritas penafsir dan metodologi tafsir tematik di berbagai sektor, termasuk negara, pesantren, universitas, dan individu. Dengan menggunakan metode analisis kritis, penelitian ini mengungkap beberapa temuan kunci. Pertama, terjadi pergeseran otoritas, di mana para penafsir Al-Qur'an di Indonesia tidak lagi terbatas pada *mufassir* tradisional, tetapi kini juga mencakup para sarjana dari bidang non-agama. Kedua, pergeseran metodologi terlihat dalam beberapa aspek: perumusan judul redaksional tafsir, pengurangan pemilihan ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an sebagai data primer penelitian, dan munculnya kecenderungan interpretatif yang berbeda. Selain itu, terdapat perubahan paradigma dalam hubungan antara teks Al-Qur'an dan realitas sosial, di mana satu pendekatan dimulai dengan teks Al-Qur'an yang menghasilkan interpretasi idealis-normatif, sementara pendekatan lain dimulai dari realitas sosial yang menghasilkan interpretasi aplikatif-solutif.



Penelitian ini mengisi kesenjangan akademis yang penting dengan menyoroti perubahan besar dalam tafsir tematik, serta memberikan wawasan tentang perkembangan metodologi dan relevansinya dalam menanggapi realitas sosial kontemporer di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: *Perkembangan Tafsir; Tafsir di Indonesia; Tafsir Kontemporer; Tafsir Tematik.*

Introduction

The thematic exegesis method involves interpreting al-Qur'an by gathering verses related to specific themes without being bound by the sequential order of the *muṣḥafī*. It requires conducting meticulous and deep analysis and correlating verses to develop a comprehensive and systematic concept. This method aims to interpret al-Qur'an objectively and seeks to provide answers to current real-world issues.¹

Scholars at the Bachelor's (S1), Master's (S2), and Doctoral (S3) levels have conducted extensive research on thematic exegesis methods. They have explored various titles such as "Qur'anic Perspective on Social Justice Practices in Indonesia [Thematic Exegesis],"² "Laughter in al-Qur'an (A Thematic Study with Psychological Approach),"³ "Divine Decree in the Qur'anic Perspective: A Sociological Study with Thematic Exegesis Approach,"⁴ and similar topics. These studies are present in the databases of Indonesian Islamic Universities. Other thematic models include various approaches including ecology, gender, feminism, linguistic, etc.

In his research titled "The Dynamics of Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis in State Islamic Universities," M. Nurdin Zuhdi concluded that dissertations on Qur'anic studies and exegesis at the Doctoral Program of Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta from 1984 to 2013 indicate thematic exegesis as the most dominant method. Thematic exegesis first appeared in the second period and began to dominate during the third period, starting from the early pioneering years (1983–1984). Several factors support the dominance of this thematic method, including the belief that it can comprehensively address contemporary challenges.⁵ Uun Yusufa, in his study titled "Academic Qur'anic Exegesis in Indonesia," found that among various

1 Ibn Manzhūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1994), 396–398; Abū al-Ḥusain Aḥmad bin Fāris bin Zakariyā, *Mu'jam Maqāyis al-Lughah* (Beirut: Dār al-Jail, 1991), 117.

2 Anita Widya Sari Manurung, "Perspektif Al-Qur'an terhadap Praktik Keadilan Sosial Di Indonesia (Tafsir Tematik)" (Undergraduate Thesis, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, 2023).

3 Muhammad Nasrullah Asnawi Ihsan, "Tertawa dalam Al-Qur'an (Studi Tematik dengan Pendekatan Psikologi)" (Undergraduate Thesis, State Islamic University of Walisongo, 2014).

4 Ahmad Husnul Hakim, "Sunatullah dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Suatu Kajian Sosiologis dengan Pendekatan Tafsir Tematik" (Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, 2006).

5 M. Nurdin Zuhdi, "Dinamika Studi Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir Di Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri: Telaah Disertasi Studi Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir Pada Program Doktor Pascasarjana UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta 1984-2013" (PhD Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2019), 317–318.

methods and approaches in Qur'anic studies, thematic exegesis remains popular among scholars. This research demonstrates the significant influence of 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmāwī in thematic exegesis at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, where scholars either modify or appreciate this method. Meanwhile, thematic exegesis at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta is more open and dominant with a non-al-Farmāwī model.⁶

The researches mentioned above concentrate more on the study of interpretation in academic settings, where the majority of interpretations are thematic. However, a critical study on the application of thematic interpretation method has yet to be conducted in Indonesia. Considering that intellectuals and religious thinkers outside of universities and those affiliated with the government write and read theme interpretations, the authors are not limited to Islamic universities. Based on this perspective, this study highlights the development of thematic exegesis methods in Indonesia and examines any changes or reductions in their implementation since their initial formulation in the 1970s. The research investigates whether there have been any shifts or reductions in the implementation of thematic exegesis methods.

The Historical Perspective of Thematic Exegesis: From Middle East to Indonesia

The thematic exegesis method emerged in response to the shortcomings of previous exegesis methods employed by scholars when interpreting the Qur'an. Scholars perceived these methods to have several weaknesses that needed to be addressed with alternative methods. Aḥmad al-Sayyid al-Kūmī, a figure often cited among Sunni circles, pioneered the application of thematic exegesis at al-Azhar University in Cairo in the 1970s. Among Shia circles, particularly in Najaf,⁷ Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr is considered a pioneer of the thematic exegesis method. In his final lectures, spanning approximately 14 sessions, al-Ṣadr critiqued the development of classical exegeses. He proposed a method that positions the exegete not merely as passive before the verses of al-Qur'an but actively engaged in dialogue with the Qur'an.⁸

This Background indicates that in the 1970s, scholars began to recognize

6 Uun Yusufa, "Tafsir Alquran Akademik Di Indonesia: Kajian Metode Tematik Disertasi di UIN Yogyakarta dan UIN Jakarta" (PhD Thesis, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, 2016), 217–218.

7 Joyce N. Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), 11; Chibli Mallat, *Menyegarkan Islam: Kajian Komprehensif Pertama Atas Hidup Dan Karya Bāqir al-Shadr* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001), 22–23.

8 Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, *Al-Madrasāt al-Qur'āniyyah* (Qum: Markaz al-Abhāts wa al-Dirasāt al-Takhashshushiyah li al-Shahid al-Ṣadr, 1979), 22–23.

or apply the thematic method as a method of interpreting al-Qur'an with specific principles and procedures. However, 'Abd. Al-Sattār and other students of al-Kūmī explained that the embryo of thematic exegesis were already present since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. They mention three aspects that can be considered as embryo of thematic exegesis: first, the Prophet Muhammad interpreted between Qur'anic verses;⁹ second, the companions of the Prophet gathered verses that seemed contradictory;¹⁰ third, there was study of Arabic language;¹¹ fourth, study of jurisprudence;¹² fifth, *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* which discussed based on certain themes.¹³

Entering the 14th century H or 20th century AD, the growth of tafsir works was even faster, even leading to stagnation of thought. The name Muhammad Abduh (d.1905) was mentioned as the main figure in the renewal of Islamic thought. For Abduh, the way to interpret al-Qur'an in the modern era should not only be a rebroadcast of previous tafsir books (*taqlid*). His efforts to dismantle stagnant thinking patterns in interpreting al-Qur'an were well received by modern society, as evidenced by the benefits of the *Tafsir al-Manār*. The tafsir products produced by Abduh and his student, Rasyid Ridha, found space in society, especially modern society, which wanted to be free from the shackles of myth and irrationality.¹⁴

Muslim scholars after Abduh continued his spirit of renewal, including Abdullah Dirraz (d. 1958AD). According to Dirraz, a method combining *naql* (narration and history) and *'aql* (reasoning) is needed to explore the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an. The existence of *naṣ* must be connected with the context or reality of ongoing life. The method of unifying the authenticity of Islamic texts with social conditions that continue to develop is Dirraz's main mission in grounding the understanding of the Qur'an. Abdullah Dirraz emphasized that al-Qur'an is like a series of interlocked diamonds without flaws. Al-Qur'an should be positioned

9 'Abd al-Sattār Fathullah Sa'īd, *Al-Madkhal Ilā al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'i* (Kairo: Dār al-Tawzī' wa al-Nasyr al-Islāmiyyah, 1991), 28–22; Ṣalāh 'abd al-Fattāh al-Khālīdī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'i Baina al-Nazhariyah Wa al-Taṭbīq* (Oman: Dār al-Nafā'is, 2012), 32–35; Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-, *Al-Itqān Fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, vol. 4 (Mesir: al-Hai'ah al-Mishriyyah al-'Ammah li al-Kitāb, 1974), 187.

10 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn* (Beirut: Nasyr Dār al-Jail, n.d.).

11 Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Mabāhith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'i*, p. 20.

12 Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Mabāhith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'i*, p. 23.

13 See Abū 'Ubaidah Ma'mar ibn al-Mutsannā al-Taimī, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, tahqiq: Muḥammad Fuad Sanrikīn (Cairo: Muḥammad Sāmī Amīn al-Khanjī, 1954). Abū 'Ubaid al-Qāsim bin al-Salām al-Harawī, *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh fī al-Qur'ān al-'Azīz*, tahqiq: Muḥammad bin Ṣalāh al-Mudhaifir (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Rasyad, n.d.). Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Mabāhith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'i*, pp. 21-22; Al-Khālīdī, *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'i*, p. 36; Muḥammad Ḥusain al-Dhahābī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasirūn*, vol. I, pp. 148-149.

14 Muhammad Wardah dkk., *"Telaah Kitab Tafsir"*, (Jakarta: Sejahtera Kita, 2021), accessed August 26, 2024, [https://repository.iain-ternate.ac.id/id/eprint/322/1/Telaah Kitab Tafsir .pdf](https://repository.iain-ternate.ac.id/id/eprint/322/1/Telaah%20Kitab%20Tafsir.pdf).

as a book that is always relevant, down to earth and able to solve every problem experienced by humans.¹⁵

The reform of Islamic studies, especially the study of the Qur'an, was continued by Mahmud Shaltut (d. 1963 AD). Known as a reformer who tried to modernize Islamic education in Egypt by promoting more rational and dynamic thinking in religious studies, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* (The first ten *Juz*) is his monumental work in the field of Qur'anic interpretation. His idea is that interpreting al-Qur'an is not just a normative description but must actively respond to social reality. Jansen, a researcher of Qur'anic interpretation from the Netherlands, also recognized this.¹⁶ The reform of the study of al-Qur'an was continued by al-Kūmī, one of Shaltut's students who introduced a breakthrough in the flow of interpretation that was not fixated on the order of verses in al-Qur'an (*tartib muṣḥafi*), but on the integrity of the unity of the theme in verses across *ṣūrah*s and emphasized more on the connection between verses of al-Qur'an discussing the similar topic. He offered this method as the thematic method at al-Azhar University in Cairo in the 1970s. Al-Kūmī's student, al-Farmāwī, was called upon to formulate *maudū'i* method in his work *Al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsir al-Maudū'i*. This work later became one of the primary references in the study of thematic interpretation in the Islamic world, including the study of interpretation in Indonesia.

Al-Farmāwī's contribution to change the direction of the model of producing Qur'anic interpretations is very significant, including efforts to label interpretation products before the emergence of *maudū'i* with terms that were previously not found in the literature of Qur'anic studies. The labeling of *tahlīlī* interpretation is intended for a number of interpretation products that have two characteristics. First, the order should be adjusted according to the *muṣḥaf*; second, the point of view of the interpretation should be in accordance with the scientific discipline owned and the school of thought adopted by the exegete. At the same time, the label of *ijmālī* interpretation is specifically for interpretation products that focus on the global meaning of the verses. The next label is *muqāran* interpretation for Qur'anic exegesis products with various tendencies inspire interpretation researchers to compare interpretations. From those labels, it can be concluded that the labeling of *tahlīlī*, *ijmālī*, and *muqāran* as interpretation methods is a benchmark for the existence of the *maudū'i* method.

Al-Farmāwī's steps in formulating al-Kūmī's ideas were followed by his

15 Abdullah Diraz, *Madkhal ila al-Quran al-Karim*, (Kuwait: Dar al-Qalam, 1983), 71

16 See Wildan Hidayat, "Tekstur Baru Tafsir Modern: Mahmud Syaltut dan Nalar Tematik Non Sektarian dalam Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an," *Hermenetik: Jurnal Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 16, no. 1 (2022): 130.

colleagues. Unlike al-Farmāwī, who explained two types of thematic interpretations, namely based on surah and based on verses of al-Qur'an with one theme, Muṣṭafā Muslim, a Syrian scholar, and al-Khalidi classified three models of thematic interpretations, namely by adding one model from what al-Farmāwī had formulated, namely thematic interpretation based on words or terms in the Qur'an, which tends to be more linguistic.¹⁷ This is different from al-Sattār who socialized al-Kūmī's ideas by classifying thematic interpretations based on their presentation, namely *al-tafsir al-mauḍū'i al-wājiz*.¹⁸ *al-tafsir al-mauḍū'i al-wasit*,¹⁹ *al-tafsir al-mauḍū'i al-basit*.²⁰ The next scholar, al-Daghamin then construct, from previous thematic concept, the classification of *mauḍū'i* as normative Quranic thematic interpretations that can be used as guidelines for life.²¹ He tried to view the methodology based on the correlation between al-Qur'an and end in social reality, which is termed *min al-naṣ ilā al-wāqi'*. According to al-Daghamin, thematic interpretation offers to prioritize reading reality first and then consult with Quranic values as formulated by al-Ṣadr with the term *min al-wāqi'ilā al-naṣ*.²²

Al-Farmāwī's influence was not only on Middle Eastern commentaries but also on Indonesian scholars. As in the Middle East, the presence of the thematic method as an offer of an interpretation method also bridges the function of interpretation on social reality that is not found in previous interpretation models. Some of the existing interpretations by Indonesian commentators include "Tarjumān al-Mustafid" written by an Acehnese scholar, Abdur Rauf al-Sinkili in Malay, estimated to have been completed around 1675 AD; "Tafsīr al-Furqān" written in Indonesian by a follower of the Persis group, A. Hassan (1930s A.D.); "Tafsir al-Nūr" by Hasbi al-Shiddiqy in Indonesian (1950s); Tafsir al-Ibriz written in Javanese by Bisri Mustofa (1960s); "Tafsir al-Azhar" in Indonesian written by HAMKA (1967-1970 AD); "Tafsir Faidl al-Rahmān" written in Javanese by Misbah Mustofa (1990s), Tafsir al-Misbah written by M. Quraish Shihab in Indonesian (2000s). The Differences influenced the contestation of the interpretation of the Indonesian Qur'an in tendencies, socio-

17 Muṣṭafā Muslim, 25-26

18 It means the simple thematic exegesis by discussing a little sample of Qur'anic verses discussing particular topic. 'Abd al-Sattār, 26-27.

19 It means medieval thematic exegesis by choosing verses about specific topic from some *sūrahs* of al-Qur'an. 'Abd al-Sattār, 26-27.

20 It means detail exegesis by elaborating all verses discussing the chosen topic with various keywords. 'Abd al-Sattār, 26-27

21 Al-Daghamin, *Manhajiyah al-Bahts fi al-Tafsir al-Mauḍū'i li al-Qur'an al-Karim*, 25.

22 al-Ṣadr, *al-Madrāsāt al-Qur'āniyyah...*, 30.

cultural backgrounds, and others, until finally, M. Quraish Shihab continued the idea of his teacher, al-Farmāwī, to ground the thematic method in the interpretation of the Qur'an. Through the work of *Warwasan Al-Qur'an*, Quraish Shihab succeeded in changing the nuance of research on the study of al-Qur'an from an analytical study of *sūrah*s or verses according to the *Muṣḥafī* tradition to thematic commentaries.²³

The influence of Quraish Shihab's thematic interpretation offer has spread to both undergraduate and postgraduate academic research. This is proven by several studies showing that *mauḍū'ī* method as the main choice in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Lilik Umami Kaltsum et al. reported their research results that most dissertations on the study of al-Qur'an are applications of the thematic interpretation method, and the figure featured is al-Farmāwī. Likewise, M. Nurdin Zuhdi's research, which focuses on the development of dissertations at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, concluded that the study of al-Qur'an using the thematic method still dominates by adding a variety of approaches.²⁴ The academic and non-academic communities also feel the benefits of thematic interpretation products so the State needs to produce thematic interpretation products that can be efficiently utilized by the wider community, which will be explained in the next subsection.

Methodological Steps in Thematic Exegesis

1. *Establishing and Limiting the Topic*

The establishment and limitation of the discussed theme are aimed to ensure that the research direction remains on track from beginning to end and does not discuss matters unrelated to the title.²⁵ When determining a topic, researchers must select themes explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, such as the theme of *Jihad in the perspective of the Qur'an* and so on. According to al-Sattār and other students of al-Kūmī, researchers are not allowed to choose titles with phrases or words that are not explicitly found in the Qur'an. For example, themes like Democracy, pluralism, and family planning are not allowed because these terms are not found in the Qur'an.

23 Abdul Djalal, *Tipologi Tafsir Mauḍū'ī di Indonesia* (Surabaya: UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2018), 80.

24 Read more the research of Lilik Umami Kaltsum et al., "Map of Study of The Quran in The Postgraduate Program of UIN Jakarta and UIN Yogyakarta Period of 2005-2012", *Ilmu Ushuluddin*, Vol. 8, No. 1, July 2021, 39; see also M. Nurdin Zuhdi, "Dinamika Studi Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir di Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri: Telaah Disertasi Studi Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir pada Program Doktor Pascasarjana UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta 1984-2013", *Dissertation for Doctoral Program (Ph.D.) in Islamic Studies, Postgraduate Program Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta 2019*; Jauhar Azizy et al., "Konsistensi Penerapan Metode Mauḍū'ī dalam Skripsi Program Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir Tahun 2019-2021", *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadis*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2021).

25 Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Mabāhith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'ī*, p. 37. Measures are formulated together with al-Sattār, but rather shortened, while al-Sattār, al-Farmāwī summarizes.

According to al-Sattār, the determination of themes should be based on the meanings contained within those terms and should not follow current shifts in meaning. For example, the term “*sharī’ah*” found in al-Qur’an is not limited to Islamic jurisprudence alone but encompasses the entirety of religious provisions. Similarly, the term “*fiqh*” in al-Qur’an indicates a comprehensive understanding of religion rather than just laws related to worship (*ibadah*) and transactions (*mu’amalah*).²⁶ Thus, the method of thematic tafsir does not close itself off to new issues that are not explicitly mentioned in the Qur’an. However, the approach differs slightly by searching for verses whose meanings either support or reject aspects related to the established title, then processing them accordingly. For instance, for a theme like “Democracy,” which is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur’an, the exploration would focus on verses related to elements within democracy, such as verses on consultation (*shura*) to achieve consensus.²⁷

2. *Exploration and Compilation of Qur’anic Verses*

Researchers must compile all Qur’anic verses related to the chosen topic without neglecting any verse, as this can influence the conclusions drawn. In this context, al-Sattar categorize thematic exegesis into three types: *al-Wajīz*, *al-Wasīṭ*, and *al-Baṣīṭ*. The *al-Wajīz* type of thematic exegesis only considers verses that contain terms corresponding to the established title, such as the theme of “*jihād*” without considering verses that use other terms like *qitāl* and *ḥarb*. The second type, *al-Wasīṭ*, gathers related verses but deliberately excludes some that are implied by other verses. This includes exegesis that only analyzes one surah or thematic exegesis based on a particular surah. The third type, *al-Baṣīṭ*, involves tracing all verses that are directly or indirectly related to the intended theme. The first and second types are referred to as general thematic exegesis (*‘am*), while the third type is known as specific thematic exegesis (*khaṣṣ*). According to their understanding, the specific thematic exegesis is the true form of thematic exegesis.²⁸

Some *mauḍū’i* scholars recommend consulting *Muḥjam* (dictionaries) and similar reference books to facilitate the tracing of verses.²⁹ With a perfect memorization of the Qur’an, a *mauḍū’i* interpreter can arrange the verses according

26 As mentioned in QS. al-Jatsiyah [45]: 19 and QS. al-Tawbah [9]: 122.

27 ‘Abd al-Sattār, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū’i*, p. 59-60; Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Mabāhith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū’i*, p. 139; and al-Farmāwī, *al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū’i: Dirasah Manhajiyah Mauḍū’iyyah*, p. 81.

28 Al-Khālīdī, *al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū’i*, p. 42; ‘Abd al-Sattār, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū’i*, p. 62.

29 See Al-Khālīdī, *al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū’i*, p. 48. ‘Abd al-Sattār, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū’i*, p. 35-36. Muḥammad Ḥusain ‘Alī al-Shaghīr, *al-Mustashriqūn wa al-Dirasāt al-Qur’āniyyah* (Beirut: al-Muassasah al-Jam’iyyah li al-Dirasāt, 1986), p. 5.

to the needs and understand their meanings well.³⁰ The effort to trace closely related and opposite terms, along with understanding their meanings, demonstrates that each word used in al-Qur'an has a different scope of meaning and application. The concept of synonyms (*mutarādif*) in al-Qur'an does not imply identical meanings and functions, but rather indicates closely related meanings.³¹

3. *Classification According to the Chronology of Revelation*

In the third stage, the arrangement is carried out according to the chronological order of the revelation, so it can be determined whether the verse is Makki or Madani. This classification is more necessary when the focus is on Sharia laws, such as the prohibition process of *khamr* (intoxicants) and *riba* (usury). A researcher can refer to books on 'ulūm al-Qur'ān such as "*al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*" by al-Zarkashī and "*al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*" by al-Suyūṭī, or also "*Mu'jam al-Mufabras*" by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Bāqī, which marks Makki verses with the letter "*kaf*" and Madani verses with the letter "*mīm*".³²

4. *Interpretation of Qur'anic Verses*

Although classified differently, these scholars agree that a study cannot be categorized as thematic exegesis (*tafsir mauḍū'i*) if it only considers certain verses and disregards others related to the topic.³³ This approach can lead to inaccurate conclusions or generalizations. *Mauḍū'i* scholars also recommend researchers to consult various traditional commentaries (*tafsir Tahliḷi*) to understand the meanings of the verses, including aspects like abrogation (*nāsikh-mansūkh*), contextual relevance (*munasabah*), reasons for revelation (*asbāb al-Nuzūl*), and others.³⁴

5. Systematic Arrangement

After understanding and mastering the meaning content of the verses

30 al-Farmāwī, *al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'i: Dirasah Manhajiyah Mauḍū'iyyah*, p. 32; 'Abd al-Sattār, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'i*, p. 59.

31 See Āmīn al-Khulī, *Manāhij al-Tajdīd fī al-Nahw wa al-Balāghah wa al-Tafsīr wa al-Adāb* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifāh, 1961 M), p. 122; 'Āishah 'Abd al-Rahmān, *al-Tafsīr al-Bayān li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'arif, 1990 M), p. 31.

32 Al-Daghāmīn, *Manhajiyat al-Baḥs*, p. 35; 'Abd al-Sattār, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'i*, p. 60; al-Farmāwī, *al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'i: Dirasah Manhajiyah Mauḍū'iyyah*, p. 62; Al-Khālīdī, *al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'i*, p. 68-69.

33 al-Farmāwī, *al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'i: Dirasah Manhajiyah Mauḍū'iyyah*, p. 62; Al-Khālīdī, *al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'i*, p. 68-69; Al-Daghāmīn, *Manhajiyat al-Baḥs*, p. 37; 'Abd al-Sattār, *al-Madkhal ilā al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'i*, p. 64.

34 Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Mabāhith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'i*, p. 52; al-Farmāwī, *al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'i: Dirasah Manhajiyah Mauḍū'iyyah*, p. 64-67.

thoroughly, the next step for the researcher is to divide these verses into several elements and then arrange them systematically. The researcher aims to correct the relationship between the verses within the framework of the predetermined theme without forcing the verses.³⁵ The placement of each verse is organized in such a way as to form a comprehensive and systematic big concept. This is because thematic exegesis is closely related to the theme or title that has been established. If there is doubt or inaccuracy in the selection of the title from the beginning, the understanding, arrangement of verses, and the final concept formed will also be less accurate.

Central Figures and Various Formats of Individual Thematic Exegesis in Indonesia

Suppose the initiator is understood in the context of who the first figure to write a commentary was using thematic. In that case, it may be challenging to find because of the limitations of thematic commentary. Several central figures indicated to have used thematic aspects, although in a straightforward form, are Mahmud Yunus in “Tafsir Qur’an Karim” (First Published in 1950), Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy in “Tafsir al-Bayan” (First published in 1966) and Ahmad Hassan in “al-Furqan Tafsir Qur’an” (First Published in 1956). These works are considered the embryo of thematic commentary in Indonesia because they have attempted to create a thematic index of verses on specific themes.³⁶

Regarding the initiator of thematic interpretation in Indonesia, Quraish Shihab is one of the most central figures, even called the thematic interpretation agency in Indonesia.³⁷ Although not the first to write thematic interpretation, at least the attribution of agency to Shihab in thematic interpretation can be supported by three things. First, Shihab has a magnum opus, Tafsir Al-Misbah, which is phenomenal in Indonesian society, so his brand as an expert in interpretation is undeniable.³⁸ Second, Shihab is an alumnus of al-Azhar who was even once a student of the central initiator of thematic interpretation in Egypt.³⁹ Third, His work in thematic interpretation is numerous and well-known in society, especially in academics.⁴⁰

35 ‘Abd al-Sattār *al-Madkhal ilā al-Tafsīr al-Maudū’i*, p. 60.

36 Jauhar Azizy, Mohammad Anwar Syarifuddin, and Hani Hilyati Ubaidah, “Thematic Presentations in Indonesian Qur’anic Commentaries,” *Religions* 13, no. 2 (2022): 140.

37 Djalal, *Tipologi Tafsir Maudu’i di Indonesia*, 80.

38 Zaenal Arifin, “Karakteristik Tafsir Al-Mishbah,” *AL-IFKAR: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 13, no. 01 (March 31, 2020): 4.

39 Desni Nelawati, “Analisis Pemikiran Syaikh Mahmud Syaltut Tentang Keluarga Berencana” (Phd Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, 2023), 20

40 From among Shihab works that are dominant in employing thematic method are “Jin dalam al-Qur’an, Hidangan Ilahi dalam Ayat-Ayat Tahlil”, “Malaikat dalam Al-Qur’an” dan “Wawasan al-Qur’an: Tafsir

Other than Shihab, several other Indonesian figures who use thematic interpretation methods including: Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an by Dawam Rahardjo (1990-1995), Konsep Kufur dalam al-Qur'an: "Suatu Kajian Teologis dengan Pendekatan Tafsir Tematik" (1991) by Harifuddin Cawidu, "Konsep Perbuatan Manusia Menurut al-Qur'an: Suatu Kajian Tematik" (1992) by Jalaluddin Rahman, "Ahl Kitab: Makna dan Cakupannya" (1998) by M. Ghalib, "Argumen Kesetaraan Jender Perspektif al-Qur'an" (1999) by Nasaruddin Umar. After 2000's, more authors with various backgrounds have used thematic interpretation methods.

Furthermore, individual writings considered thematic interpretation works are also diverse. Some are in the form of books and label their work as thematic interpretations. There are also works in the form of journal articles such as Dawam Rahardjo's work.⁴¹ The form of thematic works in the form of journal articles and scientific researches will be discussed in more detail in the next sub-chapter. There are also popular writings on internet sites such as <https://tafsiralquran.id/> and <https://www.nu.or.id/tafsir> channel. Not only on sites but social media have been a medium of conveying interpretations of the Qur'an, for example, on the Instagram accounts [tafsiralquran.id](https://www.instagram.com/tafsiralquran.id) and Qur'an review which try to package interpretations of the Qur'an in contemporary dictions and language style.⁴²

These various forms lead to two primary questions. Are popular writings on internet sites and even social media included in thematic interpretation? Of course, this will lead to a long debate among scholars regarding the limits of thematic interpretation. The author tends to look at the classification made by al-Sattār, who classifies the thematic interpretation method into three, namely *al-tafsīr al-mauḍū'i al-wajīz*, *al-tafsīr al-mauḍū'i al-wasīṭ*, and *al-tafsīr al-mauḍū'i al-basīṭ*. With this mapping, popular writings on internet sites and social media can be called thematic interpretations that are *al-Wajīz*.⁴³ This is also agreed by researchers who have studied a lot of social media interpretation in Indonesia.⁴⁴

Maudhu'i atas Pelbagai Persoalan".

41 Faris Maulana Akbar, *Tafsir Tematik-Sosial: Studi atas Ensiklopedi al-Qur'an dan Paradigma al-Qur'an Karya M. Dawam Rahardjo* (Penerbit A-Empat, 2021), 28

42 Abdul Ghany Mursalin, "Kajian Metode Tafsir di Media Sosial pada Akun Instagram @Quranreview," *Jurnal Tafsire* 11, no. 2 (2023): 34; Rahmat Nurdin, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an Di Media Sosial (Karakteristik Penafsiran Pada Akun Media Sosial @ Quranreview)," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 2 (2023): 144.

43 Ahmad Syaifuddin Amin, "Studi Kata Kallā dalam Al-Qur'an (Penerapan Metode Tafsir Tematik terhadap Jenis Kata Hurūf)" (Master Thesis, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, 2022), 43.

44 Nadirsyah Hosen, *Tafsir Al-Quran di Medsos: Mengkaji Makna dan Rahasia Ayat Suci pada Era Media Sosial (REPUBLIC)* (Bentang Pustaka, 2019), 2; Muhamad Fajar Mubarak and Muhamad Fanji Romdhoni, "Digitalisasi Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir Media Sosial Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 1, no. 1 (2021): 111; Roudlotul Jannah, "Tafsir Al-Quran Media Sosial: Studi Model Tafsir Pada Akun

Including popular writings in the interpretation raises a second problem, namely, the problem of authority. In traditional Islamic circles, the authority to interpret the Qur'an is only held by religious elites who are considered to have very high standards, namely mastering various Islamic scientific disciplines.⁴⁵ However, with internet sites and social media, everyone has the right to comment and even interpret the Qur'an through various platforms. The shift in authority occurs in contemporary *maudū'i* interpretation in Indonesia when traditional authority must be faced with the freedom of social media from people with various backgrounds and knowledge.⁴⁶ However, it should be underlined that this shift does not only occur in interpretations on social media but also in thematic interpretations in general. Many thematic interpretations, especially in Indonesia, are written by academics who do not have a background in interpretation or even do not have a background in religion (formally). For example, Dawam Rahardjo, who has a background as an economist and social expert, wrote "Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an", one of the early thematic interpretation works in Indonesia.⁴⁷ Likewise, Agus Mustofa wrote various books that are thick with thematic interpretations in his modern Sufism series, such as "Ibrahim Pernah Atheis", "Adam tak Diusir dari Surga", "Ternyata Adam Dilahirkan", and "Memahami Al-Qur'an dengan Metode Puzzle" also majored in nuclear engineering.⁴⁸ This confirms the shift in interpretive authority through the development of thematic interpretations in Indonesia.

Revisiting Thematic Exegesis in Islamic Boarding Schools and Universities

The Indonesian educational institutions that have contributed the most to the development of interpretation in Indonesia are *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and Islamic universities. Although more rapid than Islamic universities, Islamic

Instagram @Quranrview" (PhD Thesis, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University Malang, 2021), 45.

45 Ahmad Syaifuddin Amin, "Mengokohkan Otoritas Mufassir Melalui Uşul al-Tafsir (Review Kitab 'Ilm al-Tafsir: Uşuluhu wa Manāhijuhū karya Muhammad Afifuddin Dimiyati)," *Diya Al-Afkar: Jurnal Studi al-Quran dan al-Hadis* 9, no. 02 (February 4, 2022): 220.

46 Nadirsyah Hosen, "Challenging Traditional Islamic Authority: The Impact of Social Media in Indonesia," in *Proceedings of International Conference on Da'wa and Communication*, vol. 1, 2019, 84.

47 Ulfa Munifah, "Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Sosial Berdasarkan" (Master Thesis, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, 2017), 5.

48 Erma Sauva Asvia, "Telaah Epistemologi Penafsiran Agus Mustofa (Studi Ayat-Ayat Akhirat dalam Tafsir Ilmi)," *Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta* (2018): 5; Muhamad Yoga Firdaus, "Tafsir Agus Mustofa: Latar Belakang, Metodologi, dan Kelahiran Adam," *Thesis, Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung* (2020): 55.

boarding schools play the most central role in producing *mufassir*.⁴⁹ Several Indonesian interpreter figures are alums of several Islamic boarding schools before continuing their university education. However, Islamic universities usually no longer educate their students with basic knowledge of Islamic disciplines, so it is not surprising that those who can then surf further in knowledge at university have a strong foundation in knowledge at Islamic boarding schools.

Furthermore, Islamic boarding schools have been the forerunners of the first tafsir teaching in Indonesia since the beginning. *Pesantren* became the center of teaching the interpretation of al-Qur'an before establishing Islamic universities.⁵⁰ In the following period, Islamic boarding schools also produced several works of interpretation, including "Tafsir Al-Ibriz" by KH. Bisri Mustofa, "Al-Iklil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil" and "Taj al-Muslimin" by KH. Misbah Mustofa, "al-Mahalli" by KH. Mujab Mahalli, etc.⁵¹ However, of the many interpretations that were born in Islamic boarding schools, the works that use thematic methods are Tafsir Ibadah by Abd Kholiq Hasan, "Tafsir Maudhu'i al-Muntaha" by *tim Sembilan*, "Tafsir al-Maqashidi" by Prof. Dr. KH. Abdul Mustaqim.⁵² However, the productivity of *Pesantren* figures in writing tafsir works is not as much as in universities. This can be framed in at least two circumstances. First, the figure who wrote the tafsir was then better known for his academic background than the *Pesantren*, even though, at the same time, he was actually also the leader of a *Pesantren*. Second, after completing basic knowledge in the *Pesantren*, someone continues his education or career in university so that his latest background is better known.

In contrast to the world of Islamic boarding schools, universities have the most dominant role in developing thematic interpretation in Indonesia. As an academist have been being active in giving lectures in universities, Shihab has much contributions for Indonesian society, particularly the academic community, to become acquainted with a method of Quranic study that is easier to understand and quicker to grasp Quranic concepts related to life's issues. The socialization of this thematic exegesis method is integrated into compulsory coursework, such as in the curriculum of undergraduate (S1), master's (S2), and even doctoral (S3) programs at Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTAI) in Indonesia. For instance, the master's program (S2)

49 Kurdi Fadal, "Genealogi dan Transformasi Ideologi Tafsir Pesantren: Abad XIX Hingga Awal Abad XX," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 11, no. 1 (March 30, 2018): 74.

50 Muhammad Asif, "Tafsir dan Tradisi Pesantren," *SUHUF* 9, no. 2 (2016): 245.

51 Abdul Latif, "Spektrum Historis Tafsir Al-Qur'an Di Indonesia," *TAJDID: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 18, no. 1 (2019): 110.

52 Ahmad Baidowi and Yuni Ma'rufah, "Dinamika Karya Tafsir Al-Qur'an Pesantren Jawa," *Al-Itqan: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 8, no. 2 (n.d.): 267.

at the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, mandates thematic exegesis as a core subject for all concentrations, including doctoral students from the 2003 cohort at the Graduate School of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta.

The resonance of thematic exegesis has successfully shaped the academic mindset regarding Quranic interpretation styles deemed more suitable for the demands of modern society. This is evidenced by the continuous emergence of thematic exegesis works in the academic realm, ranging from undergraduate theses to doctoral dissertations. Research on the Mapping of Quranic Studies in the Graduate Programs of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta and Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, conducted by the author and two other researchers, through tracking dissertations from 2005 to 2012, shows that thematic exegesis studies are increasingly favored across various perspectives, both in terms of al-Qur'an itself and from the viewpoint of specific exegetes.

The author's research team's tracking of dissertations at the Graduate School of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta revealed that out of 60 dissertations on Quranic studies. Of these, 35% were centered on thematic exegesis, 26% addressed Quranic verses but were not presented thematically, 25% focused on *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* studies, and 14% discussed exegesis figures and their methodologies. At the Graduate School of Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, out of 167 dissertations, 19 were found to be focused on Quranic studies. Of these, 41% were on thematic exegesis, 18% dealt with Quranic verses but were not presented thematically, 9% focused on *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* studies, and 32% discussed exegesis figures and their methodologies.⁵³ Another study by Jauhar Azizy et al. indicated that in the repository database of Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta during the period of 2019-2021, an average of 11% of undergraduate theses utilized the thematic exegesis methodology of al-Farmāwī.⁵⁴

The research findings indicate the dominance of thematic exegesis in academic scholarly works, signaling that presenting the meanings of al-Qur'an thematically has become a trend in interpretation. The interest in thematic exegesis is driven by the ease it provides to readers in comprehending the complete message of al-Qur'an on specific themes of relevance. Consequently, researchers anticipate that these thematic exegesis dissertations will be more beneficial to the broader community.

53 Lilik Umami Kaltsum et al., "Map of Study of The Quran in The Postgraduate Program of UIN Jakarta and UIN Yogyakarta Period Of 2005-2012", *Ilmu Ushuluddin*, Vol. 8, No. 1, July 2021.

54 Jauhar Azizy et al., "Konsistensi Penerapan Metode Maudhu'i dalam Skripsi Program Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir Tahun 2019-2021", *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadis*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2021).

Thematic Exegesis as a Part of State Interpretation

Indonesian society, as part of the modern community, always seeks instant solutions without being burdened by non-urgent or unnecessary matters, including in interpreting Quranic verses. Achmad Baiquni, in his book "*Al-Qur'an: Science and Technology*," stated this.⁵⁵ The thematic interpretation method has become one appreciated solution by Indonesian society. The government, as the responsible entity of the state, feels compelled to produce thematic interpretations that will facilitate citizens, especially Muslims, in understanding specific themes related to life issues from the perspective of al-Qur'an. The Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance (Ditjen Bimas Islam), in its introduction, conveyed that the government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, participates in studying al-Qur'an and its contents using thematic interpretation methods. The Ministry of Religious Affairs hopes that the presence of thematic interpretation works will assist the public in comprehending al-Qur'an's content and provide a new, more applicable and responsive horizon in dissecting al-Qur'an and addressing the continually evolving social realities.

Since 2008 until now, the Committee for Quran Manuscript Revision (*Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an*, LPMQ) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has produced thematic interpretations of al-Qur'an. These works are undertaken by a team consisting of experts, Quranic scholars, religious scholars, and intellectuals from various related fields. Supported and nurtured by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, this team has successfully compiled several thematic study themes of al-Qur'an such as "Al-Qur'an and Empowerment of the Less Fortunate" (2008), "Ethics in Family, Society, and Politics" (2009), "Environmental Conservation" (2009) "Law, Justice, and Human Rights" (2010), "Al-Qur'an and Diversity" (2011), "Moderate Religious Interpretation" (2022), etc.⁵⁶

According to Mukhlis M. Hanafi, thematic exegesis undertaken by interdisciplinary teams was previously anticipated by Prof. Dr. Sheikh M. Abdurrahman Bishar, former Secretary-General of the Islamic Research Institute (*Majma' al-Buḥūts al-Islāmiyyah*) at al-Azhar in the 1970s. Mukhlis quotes Bishar stating, "Honestly and with sincere hearts, we long for efforts by scholars and experts, both individually and collectively, to develop thematic exegesis, thus enriching the treasury of Quranic studies." In 2010, a group of academics from Al-Qasimia University in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, published a thematic exegesis per chapter. The team comprised 31 scholars led by Prof. Dr. Muṣṭafā Muslim and successfully published the exegesis

55 Achmad Baiquni, *Al Qur'an: Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Teknologi* (Yogyakarta: PT Dana Bahkti, 1995), p. 88.

56 For more details see <https://pustakalajnah.kemenag.go.id/koleksi?kategori=tafsir-tematik>

in 10 volumes totaling around 575 pages. Mukhlis notes that to date, there hasn't been any collective thematic exegesis supported materially or non-materially by the government.⁵⁷ These state-sponsored exegeses are termed by the author as "State exegesis."

Discussing the Changes and Shifts in Indonesian Thematic Exegesis towards Al-Qur'an

The Development of thematic Qur'anic exegesis indicates that this method remains relevant for conveying the Qur'an's messages, both in formal academic contexts and non-formal settings. However, there have been shifts between early and current thematic exegesis works. These differences include the shift in authority and in methodology.

As discussed in the previous sub-chapter, the change in the authority of interpretation in Indonesia became increasingly apparent when the trend of thematic interpretation began. If previously, *tahlili* interpretation works were relatively almost written by scholars with a solid Islamic scientific background, then thematic interpretation works since their inception in Indonesia have been colored by people with educational backgrounds other than religion. Furthermore, the phenomenon of thematic interpretations compiled collectively by teams, for example, in the case of the *maudū'i* al-Muntaha interpretation and the thematic interpretation of the Ministry of Religion, is also a form of shift from individual interpretation writing to collective interpretation writing. Moreover, the shift in authority in interpretation is increasingly apparent in interpretations written on internet platforms, both through websites and social media.

Authoritative shift and changes occurred in Qur'anic exegesis has strong relation with the format of the interpretation result and the readers of such works. As for traditional scholar known with their *mufassir* requirements/competencies produced their exegesis as a book or journal, contemporary scholar doing their tafsir not only in such format but also in online essay and light writing in social media. Dissimilar arrangement and format of Qur'anic commentaries must lead to different readers. An Instagram account, "Quran review" with more than 430.000 followers could reach more than 10.000 likes from their followers that mostly from among the usual teenagers (not only from those with religious majoring).⁵⁸ Unlike "Quran review", Instagram account "tafsiralquran.id", even both of them present Qur'anic

57 Muchlis M. Hanafi, "Foreword by the Chief Editor of the Thematic Interpretation Team, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia", in *Kenabian (Nubuwwah) dalam Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2012), p. xxviii-xxix.

58 <https://www.instagram.com/quranreview/> accessed at 1.36 am, August 26, 2024

light commentaries in social media, “tafsiralquran.id” present the content with more formal and serious diction and style. It is not surprising that it has different followers, viewers and account than those of “Quran review”. The differences will be dominant with other commentary format such as book and journal.

Firstly, the selection of themes. Several references on thematic exegesis methodologies assert that thematic exegesis focuses on Qur'anic insights related to specific themes. They recommend titles such as “*Qur'anic Insights on Patience*,”⁵⁹ or “*Interfaith Relations*,”⁶⁰ which directly reflect Qur'anic perspectives. However, current developments show that some works limit their studies to specific scholars to narrow down discussions and facilitate tracing the scholars' opinions. Changes in the titles of thematic exegeses, such as “*Concepts of Justice from the Perspective of Sayyid Qutb*,” show that interpretations focus on how Sayyid Qutb understood verses related to justice. Researchers prioritize Sayyid Qutb's thought patterns, not just the Qur'anic verses. This thematic interpretation model allows exegetes to add explanations according to their tendencies.

Secondly, there is a methodological reduction in the tracing of verses. Some literature on thematic exegesis asserts that thematic tafsir is the result of collaboration or processing of all Qur'anic verses related to a predetermined title, thereby deriving the Qur'anic perspective on that title. However, with the evolution of time and the capabilities of commentators, some thematic exegeses now have titles like “*The Concept of Caliphate from the Perspective of the Qur'an: A Study of Thematic Exegesis of Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 30-35*.” Omitting or discarding certain related verses greatly impacts the final outcome of thematic exegesis, unless these verses are already represented elsewhere or repeated. This approach resembles the selection of samples and populations in research methodology.

Thirdly, there are tendencies and patterns of interpretation that differ. For example, titles like “The Concept of *Ahlul Bait* from the Perspective of the Qur'an” emphasize the Qur'an's view on *Ahlul Bait*. Likewise, interpretations emphasizing scientific knowledge issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs tend to dominate in their theoretical knowledge.

Fourthly, responses to real-life problems. The implementation of this theory is divided into two types: active and passive. The passive group initiates its methodological stages directly with theme establishment, followed by the induction process of verses. This type of thematic approach is known as “*min al-naş ilā al-*

59 Andi Miswar, “Wawasan Al-Qur'an tentang Sabar”, *Jurnal Adabiyah* Vol. X Nomor 1 2010; <https://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/adabiyah/article/view/5685/pdf>

60 Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, *Hubungan Antar Umat Beragama* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2008); <https://pustakalajnah.kemenag.go.id/detail/44>

wāqi” (from text to social reality). The resulting product consists of a collection of Qur’anic norms that are ideal-normative and therefore not temporal. On the other hand, the active group posits that the primary step in thematic interpretation is not direct communication with the Qur’an, but first observing reality and determining the problems to be solved by theme-based (*mauḍū’i*) exegesis. This type is known as “*min al-wāqi’ ilā al-naṣṣ*” (from social reality to text). The resultant tafsir is applicative-solution-oriented and therefore temporal, focusing primarily on solving specific cases.

When using the approach *min al-naṣṣ ilā al-wāqi’* (starting from the Qur’anic text and ending with social reality), creating thematic tafsir with the examples of themes mentioned above is sufficient to enrich Indonesia’s thematic tafsir treasury. Some proponents of this approach include al-Kūmī, Muṣṭafā Muslim, al-Farmāwī, M. Quraish Shihab, among others. However, employing the approach *min al-wāqi’ ilā al-naṣṣ* (starting from social reality and ending with the Qur’anic text), the research begins by identifying various societal issues related to the understanding, application, deviations, and misuses of these themes by society. Consequently, the resulting thematic tafsir product does not merely stop at the normative Qur’anic perspective but extends to addressing or responding to contemporary issues, Indonesian contexts, or other specific localities. Advocates of this discourse include figures such as al-Ṣadr,⁶¹ Hassan Hanafi,⁶² and others.

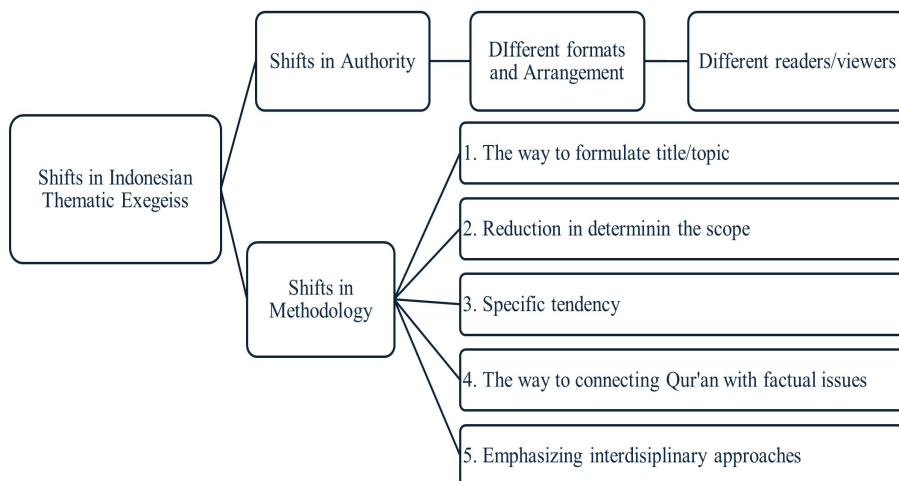
Fifthly, Emphasizing interdisciplinary approaches. For example, title like “*The Sea and Its Management in the Perspective of the Qur’an.*” He concluded that the sea and its various potentials are gifts from Allah intended for humankind. This gifting implies that humans, as Allah’s stewards on Earth, have the right to manage the sea through exploration to harness its potential, while also bearing the responsibility to conserve and maintain its ecological balance. Conservation efforts are not only aimed at preserving the marine ecology but also ensuring the survival of humanity, especially for future generations entitled to this gift. Therefore, it requires an appropriate, balanced, and proportional exploration method to prevent damage to the sea and its ecosystem.⁶³

This chart briefly describes some of the shifts in the development of thematic interpretation in Indonesia:

61 Bāqir al-Ṣadr, *al-Madrasāt al-Qur’āniyyah*, Qum: Markaz al-Abhāts wa al-Dirasāt al-Takhashshushiyah li al-Syahid al-Shadr, 1979 M.

62 Hassan Hanafi, “Method of Thematic Interpretation of the Qur’an,” in Stefan Wild, *The Qur’an as Text*, Leiden: Brill, 1996.

63 Ahmad Yusam Thobroni, “Laut dan Pengelolaannya dalam Perspektif Al-Qur’an”, *Dissertation*, Graduate School Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, 2005.



Conclusion

This research identifies several developments in the application of thematic interpretation as a method of interpreting Qur’anic verses in Indonesia. Firstly, the authorship and involvement in thematic exegesis now encompass a broader array of individuals, from traditional scholars to academics with diverse scientific backgrounds, as well as Islamic institutions like pesantren, Islamic universities, and even the state. Secondly, notable changes have occurred in both the authority and methodology of thematic exegesis. Authority has shifted, as there is now greater freedom to interpret the Qur’an, especially through online platforms and social media. This has led to various presentation formats aimed at different reader groups.

Methodological changes are noticeable in several key areas. Firstly, titles now emphasize the Qur’an’s perspective rather than the interpreter’s personal views. Secondly, there is a narrower focus on specific verses. Thirdly, new interpretive styles and trends have emerged. Fourthly, the relationship between thematic exegesis and contemporary real-world issues has evolved. Finally, interdisciplinary approaches have become more prominent in this field. While certain perspectives may view these changes as negative—especially in terms of traditional requirements for interpreters and methodological consistency—these developments have broadened the audience and application of Qur’anic teachings.

Further research could address unexplored aspects, such as how thematic interpretation might better respond to ongoing social and political challenges. Future studies could also analyze the impact of digital media on interpretive authority and its influence on societal views of the Qur’an. Additionally, research might focus on creating more comprehensive methodologies to balance ideal-normative and practical-solutive approaches within thematic exegesis.

Supplementary Materials

Acknowledgements

Authors' contributions

All listed authors contributed to this article. L.U.K wrote the original draft, reviewed and edited it, and wrote the formal analysis, compiled the resources, conceptualised the study, and managed the project administration. A.S.A was responsible for the methodology and validation and supervised the project

Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Conflicts of Interest

None of the authors of this study has a financial or personal relationship with other people that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of the study.

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