

Living Islam as a Transformative Philosophy: A Systematic Analysis and Integrative Multilevel Conceptual Model

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Abstract

Living Islam scholarship has expanded across Islamic studies, anthropology, education, bioethics, socio-ecological ethics, and digital governance, yet its findings remain fragmented between normative renewal and thick descriptions of everyday practice. This systematic analysis synthesizes how Islam is mobilized as a transformative ethical-philosophical framework under contemporary pressures and develops an integrative multilevel model linking interpretation to public outcomes. Using a protocol-guided search across Scopus, Web of Science, and targeted hand-searching, 764 records were identified; 23 duplicates were removed; 741 titles and abstracts were screened; and 57 full texts were included for content analysis. Coding captured issue domains, philosophical foundations, evidence types, levels of analysis, and recurring mechanisms of change. The corpus clusters into six thematic streams: normative foundations and interpretive renewal; lived Islam, epistemology, and methodology; education and institutional mediation; socio-ecological ethics and sustainability; bioethics and health professions; and human rights, pluralism, governance, and digital/AI ethics. Four gaps emerge: conceptual inflation, discontinuities in the mechanisms linking micro-level practices to policy-level change, limited evaluative designs, and recurring authority contestation and politicization. The resulting model traces ethical transformation from normative reinterpretation to ethical internalization, collective enactment, institutional mediation, policy translation and public governance, and observable outcomes across micro, community, institutional, policy, and global-digital levels. The model offers testable propositions for multiple-case studies across sites, participatory action research, policy evaluation, and mixed-methods validation.

Keywords:

living Islam; lived Islam; Islamic ethics; maqāṣid al-sharīʿah; maṣlahah; transformative fiqh; Qurʾanic hermeneutics; digital ethics

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Introduction

Living Islam is understood as the way Islam operates in real life, where values, worship, and moral reasoning intersect with social pressures, institutional design, and conflicts of interest (Asani, [2025](#); Dupret et al., [2012](#); Schielke, [2022](#)). Within this framework, Islam is not treated merely as a set of norms, but as a philosophy of praxis that connects ethics, spirituality, and social justice with everyday decisions, collective rhythms, and governance structures that shape the range of possible actions. The literature on lived Islam emphasizes that ethical action does not always emerge as a coherent and orderly system, but rather as a negotiation among ideals, limitations, and ambivalence within concrete social settings (Dupret et al., [2012](#); Schielke, [2022](#)). Islamic practice must therefore be understood as a living process of ethical meaning-making, rather than merely as a deviation from ideal norms.

This framework is increasingly important in addressing contemporary challenges, including socio-ecological crises, education and character formation, bioethics, human rights, pluralism, and the digital sphere. In the ecological domain, Islamic ethics cannot be limited to appeals to stewardship, but must be translated into consumption choices, incentive architectures, and sustainability policy priorities. In education, values are insufficient as curricular content, but must become dispositions cultivated through learning ecologies, role modeling, and institutional governance (Mohamed, [2014](#); Zul et al., [2026](#)). In bioethics and the digital sphere, moral reasoning must enter the domains of clinical decision-making, data governance, information verification, and the auditable allocation and distribution of risk (Chaudhary, [2020](#); Padela, [2019](#)).

The literature responds to these challenges through two major streams that are not always connected. The first strengthens normative foundations through purposive frameworks such as *maqāṣid* and *maṣlaḥah*, broadens ethical orientations toward justice, human dignity, and sustainability, and simultaneously opens debate concerning methodological boundaries and the politicization of authority (Helmy, [2021](#); Ibrahim, [2014](#); Lobah, [2016](#); Takim, [2014](#)). The second demonstrates how ethics is lived as practice through ethnographic approaches and epistemic reflection that reject the reduction of Islam to a single doctrine and emphasize the plurality of practices and moral economies (Dupret et al., [2012](#); Schielke, [2022](#)). Studies of living Islam and the renewal of Islamic thought demonstrate the breadth of this field, but also show that normative ideas, practical wisdom, and the ethnography of praxis have not always been connected within a comprehensive mechanistic explanation (Geaves, [2010](#); Lobah, [2016](#); Vogt et al., [2011](#)). When these two streams are not integrated, normative renewal can easily remain confined to an ideal horizon, while descriptions of praxis struggle to develop into mechanisms of change across levels.

The principal gap in the literature is not merely the lack of an integrative synthesis, but the absence of a map of mechanisms explaining how normative interpretation becomes ethical disposition, how that disposition persists or collapses through institutional mediation, and how policies alter the distribution of risks, rights, and opportunities in public life. Without such a map, the term living Islam risks becoming an overly broad conceptual umbrella that lacks the capacity to distinguish substantive transformation from adaptation that leaves existing structures unchanged.

This article offers a systematic synthesis and an integrative conceptual model to explain living Islam as a multilevel philosophy of transformation. Its theoretical contribution lies in organizing a chain of mechanisms extending from normative reinterpretation and ethical internalization to collective enactment, institutional mediation, policy translation, and observable public outcomes. Its practical contribution lies in providing a working map for curriculum designers, community organizers, developers of professional guidelines, and policymakers to assess where ethical values are obstructed, when they are translated into procedures, and which indicators are required to ensure that claims of transformation can be substantiated and subjected to systematic accountability. Living Islam is therefore treated as a framework that requires operational guidelines, indicators, and accountability, rather than merely a normative vocabulary.

Methods

Study Design and Analytical Logic

This study employed a protocol-guided systematic analysis combined with content analysis to develop an integrative conceptual model. This design was selected because the article aims to synthesize the living Islam literature dispersed across normative, ethnographic, and applied studies and to organize multilevel mechanisms of transformation as formulated in the Introduction. The analytical process comprised corpus mapping, criteria-based selection, thematic coding, mechanism synthesis, and conceptual modeling. Accordingly, this method was not intended to quantify effects, but to explain the conceptual relationships among normative reinterpretation, ethical internalization, collective enactment, institutional mediation, policy translation and public governance, and observable outcomes.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

The primary data sources were academic publications indexed in Scopus, with Web of Science used as a complementary database to broaden cross-disciplinary coverage. Google Scholar was used on a limited basis for targeted hand-searching and citation chasing to identify seminal or relevant academic works that were not necessarily indexed. The review primarily covered literature published from 2010 onward, while selected publications from 2008 and 2009 were retained when they served as conceptual or methodological foundations. Documents from early 2026 were included when available as in-press or early-access publications and when they met the eligibility criteria.

The search strategy was designed to balance sensitivity and specificity. Searches focused on titles, abstracts, and keywords in databases that provided these fields. The core search string combined the terms “living Islam” or “lived Islam” with broader concepts and contexts, including ethics, philosophy, maqasid, maslahah, hermeneutics, critical realism, applied Islamic ethics, eco*, sustainability, pluralism, human rights, education, governance, digital ethics, and AI. Boolean operators and wildcards were used to broaden coverage while maintaining a focus on the relationship between Islamic philosophy or ethics and social praxis in the context of contemporary transformative challenges.

Eligibility Criteria and PRISMA Selection Process

Document eligibility was determined using substantive inclusion and exclusion criteria. Documents were included if they were peer-reviewed articles, academic books, or book chapters published by credible scholarly publishers and explicitly connected Islamic philosophy or ethics with social praxis, applied decision-making, or mechanisms of change. Documents were excluded if they consisted of non-academic opinion pieces, duplicates, purely normative theology unrelated to the lived dimension, discussions of Islam without a philosophical or ethical dimension, or publications that used the term living Islam merely as a descriptive label without a clearly defined analytical function.

Selection was conducted in stages through title and abstract screening, followed by full-text assessment to ensure conceptual relevance, academic quality, and connection to mechanisms of transformation. The selection process was reported in accordance with PRISMA 2020 principles so that the stages of identification, duplicate removal, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion could be audited (Page et al., [2021](#)). Of the 764 records identified through databases, 23 duplicates were removed, 741 records were screened at the title and abstract stage, 684 records were excluded, 57 full-text reports were sought and successfully retrieved, 57 full-text reports were assessed for eligibility, and 57 studies were included in the synthesis.

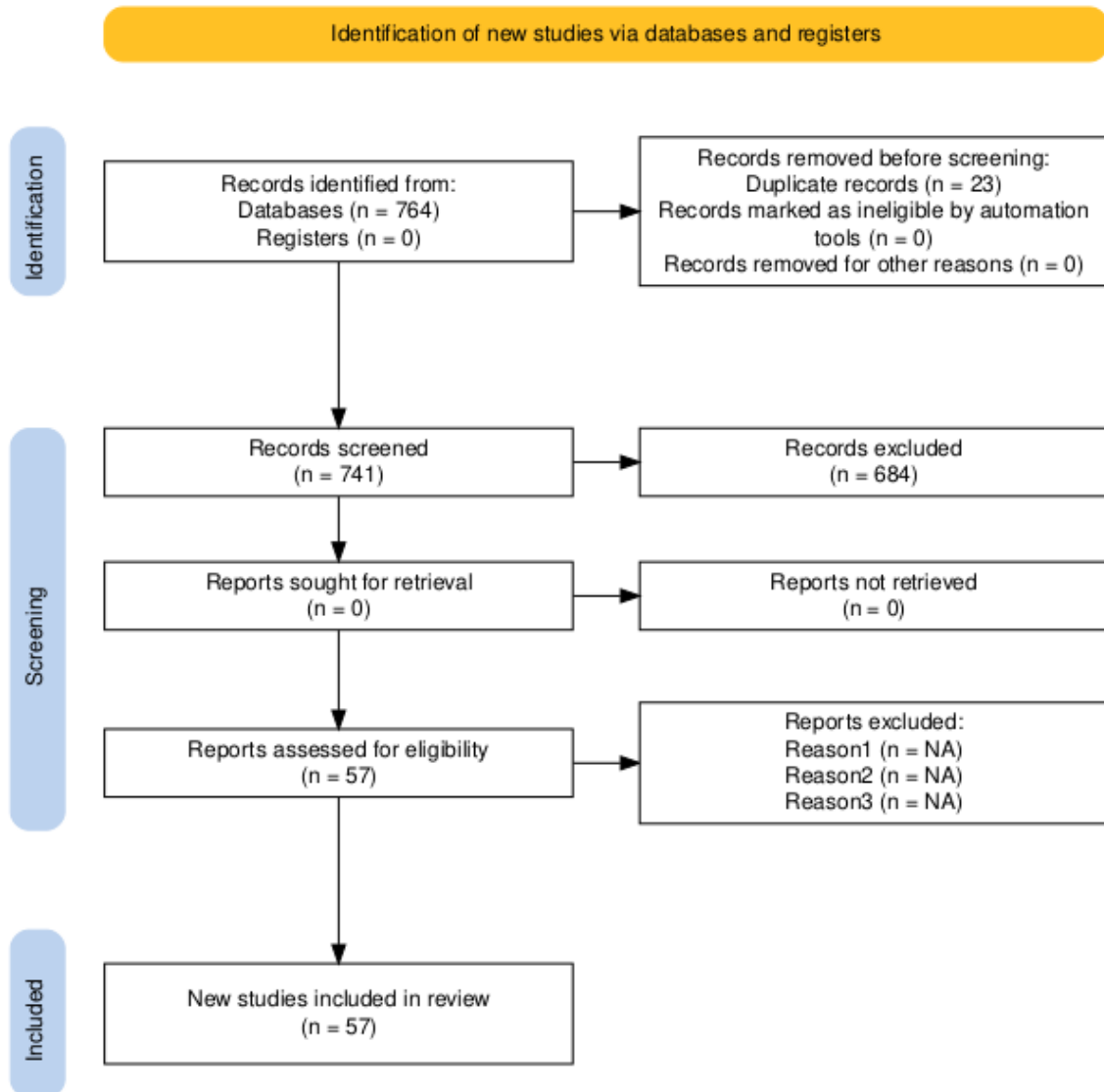


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of study selection. Records identified through databases ($n = 764$), duplicates removed ($n = 23$), records screened at the title and abstract stage ($n = 741$), records excluded ($n = 684$), full-text reports sought for retrieval ($n = 57$), full-text reports assessed for eligibility ($n = 57$), full-text reports excluded ($n = 0$), and studies included in the synthesis ($n = 57$)

Coding Scheme and Content Analysis

Content analysis employed a hybrid deductive-inductive coding scheme. Deductive codes were derived from the study objectives and the focus formulated in the Introduction, namely issue domains, philosophical foundations, types of evidence and study designs, levels of analysis, and mechanisms of transformation. The document served as the primary unit of analysis, while principal arguments, findings, and relevant conceptual statements constituted the units of coding. Inductive codes were added when full-text reading revealed recurring patterns not captured by the initial framework, such as the politicization of authority, tensions between traditionalism and progressivism, and problems related to operational guidelines.

The core codes included the issue domains of socio-ecological concerns, education, applied ethics and bioethics, human rights and pluralism, public policy, and the digital sphere; philosophical foundations included *maqāsid*, *maṣlaḥah*, transformative *fiqh*, Qur'anic hermeneutics, critical realism, and applied ethics; evidence types were categorized as conceptual, empirical, or review-based; levels of analysis ranged from the micro to the global-

digital level; and mechanisms of transformation included reinterpretation, empowerment, character formation, institutional change, and policy translation. Terms such as critical realism and transformative fiqh were treated as categories emerging from the corpus rather than as initial theoretical assumptions imposed on the data. Coding consistency was maintained through repeated reading, documentation of the reasons for inclusion and exclusion, and tracing each code back to the argument or evidence in the source document.

Thematic Synthesis and Integrative Conceptual Modeling

The synthesis produced two interrelated outputs. The thematic synthesis formulated clusters based on the problems addressed, the forms of ethical operation, and the levels of analysis, rather than solely on terminological similarities. The model synthesis organized the relationships among codes into a chain of mechanisms progressing from normative reinterpretation to ethical internalization, collective enactment, institutional mediation, policy translation and public governance, and observable outcomes. The integrative conceptual model was treated as an outcome of the synthesis rather than as an initial assumption, allowing the resulting propositions to inform an agenda for empirical testing through multiple-case studies across contexts, participatory action research, policy evaluation, or mixed-methods approaches in future studies. The final corpus analyzed comprised 57 documents, which are mapped in the Results section.

Results

Characteristics of the Literature Corpus

Based on the full-text analysis of 57 documents, the corpus exhibited three main characteristics. First, the literature was dominated by journal articles, although it also included book chapters and academic books that served as conceptual foundations. Second, conceptual works predominated over empirical studies and reviews. Third, the publications spanned five principal applied issue areas: socio-ecological issues, education and character formation, applied ethics and bioethics, human rights and pluralism, and digital/AI ethics.

Substantively, the corpus demonstrated a shift from Islam as a system of norms toward Islam as a philosophy of praxis operating at the intersection of ethical reasoning, social relations, and institutional design. Frameworks such as *maqāṣid* and *maṣlaḥah* were used to broaden the ethical horizon toward justice, sustainability, and human dignity (Ibrahim, [2014](#); Takim, [2014](#), [2021](#)). By contrast, ethnographies of lived Islam demonstrated that everyday ethics often emerged through negotiation, ambivalence, and moral economies embedded in particular situations, networks, and power constraints (Dupret et al., [2012](#); Schielke, [2022](#)). Several works also positioned the Qur'an as a philosophy of life requiring purposive interpretation, while simultaneously highlighting the risk of politicizing interpretation within arenas of public legitimation (Abdelnour, [2024](#); Adam, [2024](#); Akhtar, [2024](#)).

Cross-domain patterns indicated that education emphasized the formation of values as dispositions and habits (Mohamed, [2014](#); Zul et al., [2026](#)), bioethics required auditable decision-making procedures (Padela, [2019](#), [2022](#)), and public governance and the digital sphere required the translation of ethics into governance, regulation, and institutional procedures (Chaudhary, [2020](#); Kannike & Fahm, [2025](#)). This broad scope is productive because it demonstrates the mobility of concepts across fields, but it is also fragile because the terms living/lived Islam risk conceptual inflation when they are not supported by clear operational definitions, mechanisms, and outcome indicators.

Table 1. Characteristics of the literature corpus (n = 57).

Characteristic	Summary
Number of included publications (n)	57 documents
Publication year range	2008-2026, including in-press or early-access publications from 2026
Document type	Journal articles 37 (64.9%); book chapters 12 (21.1%); books 8 (14.0%)

Type of evidence based on full-text assessment	Conceptual 37 (64.9%); empirical 15 (26.3%); review studies 5 (8.8%)
Number of clusters	6 multilevel thematic clusters, ranging from the micro to the global-digital level

Cluster Landscape and Its Boundaries

Based on the coding of 57 documents, the corpus was grouped into six thematic clusters differentiated by their principal problems, modes of ethical operation, objects of inquiry, and recurring conceptual tensions. These clusters were not formed solely on the basis of terminological similarities, but according to how the literature operationalized Islamic ethics: as the renewal of justificatory frameworks, the interpretation of praxis, institutional mediation, the translation of sustainability, the proceduralization of professional decisions, or the design of public and digital governance.

The principal boundaries lay in the form of ethical operation. Bioethics tended to proceduralize decisions under conditions of uncertainty; education mediated values through the design of learning experiences; socio-ecological issues translated ethics into incentive architectures and sustainability agendas; while human rights, pluralism, governance, and digital/AI ethics required institutional designs capable of managing value conflicts and the distribution of risks. These clusters therefore revealed a trajectory from interpretive renewal toward praxis, institutions, policy, and public outcomes.

Table 2. Summary of thematic clusters and modes of operation in the literature.

Cluster	n (%)	Dominant mode of operation	Objek Primary focus	Recurring key tension
Normative foundations and interpretive renewal	16 (28.1%)	Renewal of frameworks for ethical justification	maqāṣid, maṣlaḥah, hermeneutics, fiqh	Normative flexibility vs. methodological discipline; politicization of authority
Lived Islam, epistemology, and methodology	10 (17.5%)	Interpretation of praxis and knowledge production	ethnography, anthropology, research ethics	Norms as negotiation vs. norms as authoritative claims
Education and institutional mediation	4 (7.0%)	Mediation of values through educational institutions	curriculum, pedagogy, organizational ecology	Value integration vs. the design of learning experiences and governance
Socio-ecological ethics and sustainability	13 (22.8%)	Translation of ethics into sustainability agendas	ecology, SDGs, green finance	Normative framing vs. impact indicators and evaluation
Bioethics and health professions	8 (14.0%)	Proceduralization of decisions under uncertainty	clinical decisions, codes of ethics, boundaries between life and death	Maqāṣid as a bridge vs. ambiguity in operational guidelines
Human rights, pluralism, governance, and digital/AI ethics	6 (10.5%)	Public ethics and governance design	human rights, democracy, legal reform, digital technologies and AI	Normative claims vs. institutional and policy mechanisms

Thematic Clusters and Analytical Contributions Normative Foundations and Interpretive Renewal

The normative foundations cluster comprised 16 documents that treated transformation as the renewal of frameworks for ethical justification. Maqāṣid and maṣlaḥah functioned to shift the orientation from formal compliance toward the protection of values, the prevention of harm, and the ordering of social objectives (Ibrahim, [2014](#); Jomaa Ahmed, [2020](#); Takim, [2014](#)). Qur'anic hermeneutics and values-based interpretations extended this orientation by positioning social change as a consequence of how texts are interpreted in relation to history, context, and moral objectives (Duderija, [2014](#); Karoui, [2020](#); Poya, [2018](#); Ramadan, [2017](#); Tamanna, [2013](#)).

Recurring patterns within this cluster revealed two principal limitations. First, purposive frameworks could be politicized when used as a language of legitimation without clear methodological discipline (Helmy, [2021](#)). Second, many normative arguments remained confined to a moral horizon, while the bridge toward indicators, procedures, or institutional design was not sufficiently robust. The literature on the relationship among the soul, objectives, and the attainment of maqāṣid demonstrated the potential for deeper ethical engagement, while simultaneously reinforcing the need for more operational rules of application (Norman & Ruhullah, [2024](#)).

Lived Islam, Epistemology, and Methodologies for Interpreting Praxis

This interpretation differs from certain classical exegeses. Ath-Thabari (2000), for example, interprets qawwamun within the framework of men's roles as guides, educators, and leaders of women within the family structure. This difference demonstrates that interpretations of gender-related verses concern not only linguistic meaning but also the social assumptions and conceptions of justice employed by interpreters.

The lived Islam cluster comprised 10 documents that portrayed ethics as a negotiated practice rather than as a normative framework that translates automatically into practice. The corpus demonstrated that individuals may uphold the same values but apply them differently because of economic pressures, family structures, power relations, or community morality. These findings affirm that norms become practicable or impracticable in concrete settings through concrete situations, rather than solely through doctrinal claims (Dupret et al., [2012](#); Schielke, [2022](#)).

At the micro level, transformation was evident when ethical negotiation was sustained through rhythms of practice, self-discipline, and community rules that structured everyday choices (Dupret et al., [2012](#); Schielke, [2022](#)). At the epistemic level, the literature examined who has the authority to define what is Islamic in research, how knowledge can be produced without reproducing power relations, and how research ethics becomes part of the ethical field itself (Ilias, [2022](#); Poljarević, [2024](#); Rattani & Hyder, [2019](#)). Similar patterns appeared in studies of cultural and literary production, in which Muslimness was shaped through narratives of identity, minority experiences, and multilayered aesthetic languages (Kuyucu, [2025](#); Llana et al., [2025](#)).

Education and Institutional Mediation

The education cluster comprised 4 documents that positioned transformation as a process of institutional mediation. The corpus demonstrated that values cannot merely be added as moral content, but must be integrated into the design of learning experiences, role modeling, rhythms of practice, and policy consistency in order to become relatively stable dispositions (Mohamed, [2014](#); Zul et al., [2026](#)). Contemplative and transformative learning approaches clarified that character formation must be understood through changes in ways of reasoning and acting, rather than solely through declarations of values.

The introduction of technology into learning environments further expanded the need for such mediation. Digital ethics in Islamic education cannot be limited to prohibitions or exhortations, but requires learning governance that cultivates verification, the responsible stewardship of information, critical literacy, and public responsibility. The literature on learning models linking religiosity, critical literacy, and digital media pointed toward avenues for renewal, while also demonstrating the need for more rigorous impact evaluation (Widodo, [2025](#); Zul et al., [2026](#)). Socio-Ecological Ethics, Sustainability, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the

Ethical Economy

The socio-ecological cluster comprised 13 documents that translated Islamic ethics into sustainability agendas. The corpus positioned maqāṣid and maṣlaḥah as frameworks for defining

objectives, while khalīfah (stewardship), mīzān (balance), and amānah (trust) functioned as a moral language for reconfiguring relationships between humans and nature, as well as patterns of consumption. Transformation within this cluster began with a shift in how ecological crises were understood, from technical issues to moral and institutional problems (Kurbianto et al., [2024](#); Nasir et al., [2022](#); Parvaiz, [2015](#)).

Applied patterns emerged when ethical frameworks were integrated into program design, community action, and empowerment initiatives. Participatory approaches in social fiqh demonstrated that ethics can operate as a framework for social organization when supported by co-design and the strengthening of local actors' capacities (Baharuddin & Musa, [2017](#); Fanani & Pohl, [2024](#)). Connections with the SDGs, Islamic ethical wealth, maṣlaḥah in Islamic economics, and green financing extended this arena to the levels of policy and incentive architecture, although the corpus also identified recurring weaknesses in indicators and impact evaluation (Mehellou et al., [2023](#); Nisa, [2025](#); Nisar & Farooq, [2021](#); Rafique & Raza, [2025](#); Raimi, [2024](#); Yasmeen et al., [2024](#)).

Bioethics and Health Professions

The bioethics cluster comprised 8 documents that required applied ethics to function as a guide for decision-making under critical conditions. Deliberations among religious scholars and medical experts revealed a gap between fiqh-based arguments and the requirements of clinical decision-making, particularly in relation to brain death, palliative care, and professional standards. When practical guidelines were unavailable or contested, conflicts of authority became a source of ethical uncertainty for patients and healthcare providers (Guessous, [2017](#); Mavani, [2014](#); Padela et al., [2011](#)).

Within this cluster, maqāṣid functioned as a bridge for balancing principles, risks, maṣlaḥah, and social responsibility, but its effectiveness depended on the clarity of protocols. The discourse on applied Islamic ethics called for renewal to prevent Islamic ethics from remaining merely normative rhetoric (Padela, [2019](#); Ramadan, [2013](#)). The corpus also demonstrated that an excessively flexible purposive framework could create practical ambiguity when it was not accompanied by coordination among relevant authorities, decision-making procedures, and a professional vocabulary that can be operationalized (Avci, [2024](#); Ismail et al., [2022](#); Padela, [2022](#)).

Human Rights, Pluralism, Governance, and Digital/AI Ethics

The human rights, pluralism, governance, and digital/AI ethics cluster comprised 6 documents that positioned ethics as institutional design. In a plural public sphere, debates on human rights and democracy required regulatory mechanisms, procedures, and the resolution of value conflicts, rather than merely abstract moral agreement. The corpus demonstrated that ethics operates through institutions that determine authorization, conflict resolution, and the distribution of justice in the contexts of minorities, interreligious relations, and legal reform (Andri Nirwana et al., [2024](#); Anshor & Muttaqin, [2022](#); Moussalli, [2013](#); Oh, [2008](#); Reifsnider, [2022](#)).

The digital and AI domains intensified the need for such governance. Maqāṣid-based digital ethics is insufficient when it remains at the level of declarations of principle, because the principal challenges concern data governance, information verification, the distribution of algorithmic risks, and institutional responsibility. The literature on Islamic digital ethics and AI governance indicated the need for a more comprehensive interdisciplinary model, while also demonstrating the limited availability of evaluable implementation evidence (Chaudhary, [2020](#); Habib, [2025](#); Kannike & Fahm, [2025](#); Ritonga et al., [2025](#)).

Integrative Conceptual Model

The integrative model was formulated from recurring patterns across the clusters, which demonstrated that ethical transformation does not proceed linearly from norms to practice, but through a sequence of mediations. This chain of mechanisms progresses from normative reinterpretation to ethical internalization, collective enactment, institutional mediation, policy translation and public governance, and observable outcomes. Enablers, constraints, and feedback loops explain why values may be strengthened, weakened, or transformed as they move across the micro, community, institutional, policy, and global-digital levels.

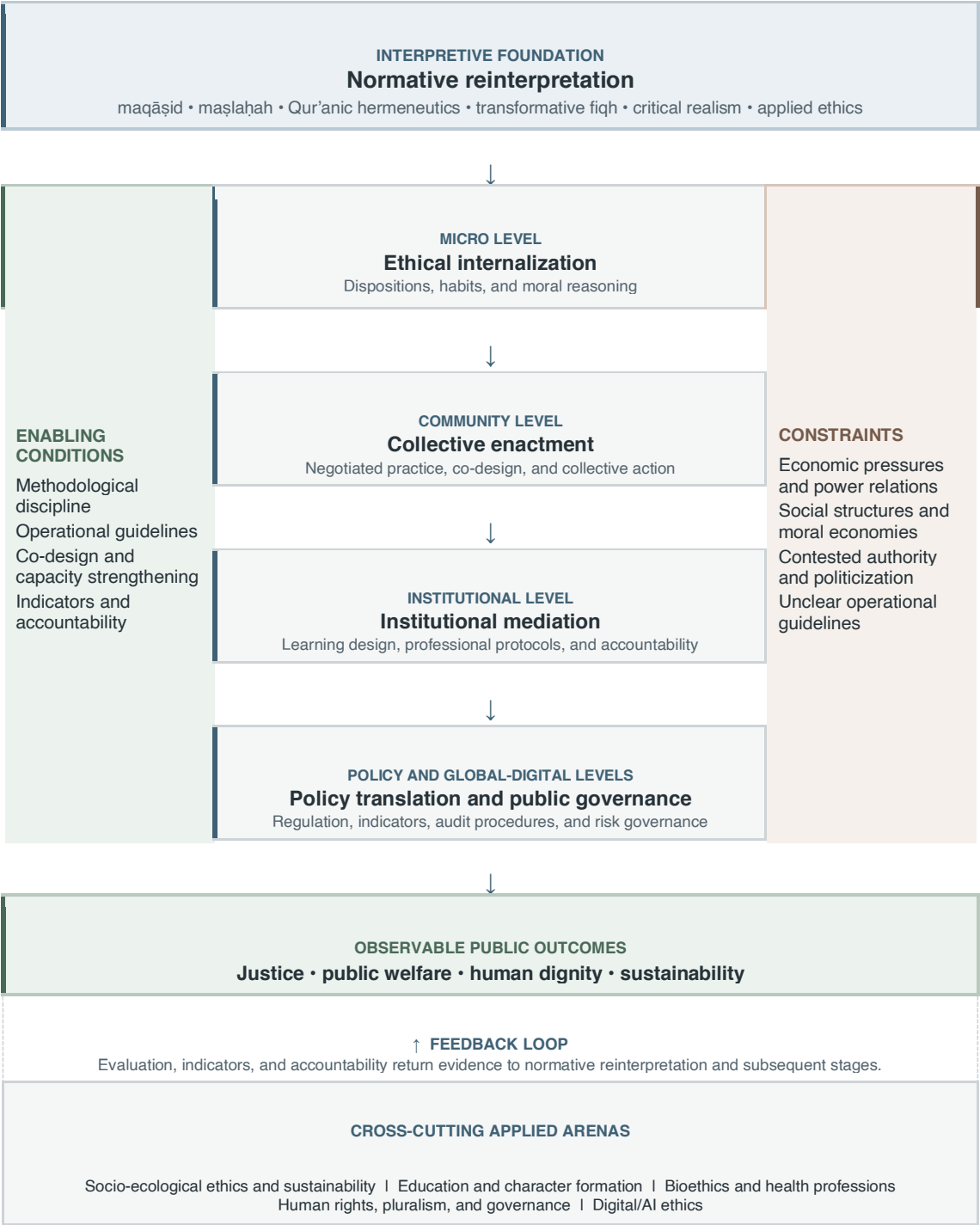


Figure 2. Integrative conceptual model of living Islam as a multilevel philosophy of transformation.

The model represents transformation as an iterative, multilevel process in which normative reinterpretation is internalized at the micro level, enacted collectively, mediated by institutions,

and translated into policy and public governance. Enabling conditions and constraints shape each stage, while evaluation, indicators, and accountability provide feedback across the five cross-cutting applied arenas.

Principal Gaps Identified by the Synthesis

The corpus revealed four principal gaps. First, the terms living/lived Islam often expanded more rapidly than the mechanisms capable of delimiting and operationalizing them, such that loose operational definitions risked turning synthesis into a compilation of themes (Ilham et al., [2025](#)). Second, the chain across levels was frequently disconnected: micro-level and community studies provided rich descriptions of practice, but pathways toward institutions, policy, and structural change were not always formulated as explicit mechanisms.

Third, evaluative designs remained limited. Many publications presented ideal directions and ethical arguments, but did not formulate outcome indicators, measurement strategies, or impact evaluations that would allow claims of transformation to be tested across contexts. Fourth, contestation over authority and the politicization of normative frameworks recurred throughout the corpus, but were often treated merely as background conditions. When authority is contested, *maqāṣid* and *maṣlaḥah* can become flexible languages of legitimation. The portability of these concepts therefore requires more explicit contextual boundaries, methodological prerequisites, operational procedures, and accountability indicators (Helmy, [2021](#)).

Discussion

This synthesis demonstrates that living Islam can be understood as a philosophy of transformation when Islamic values do not remain merely as norms, but move through a chain of mechanisms from normative reinterpretation, ethical internalization, collective enactment, institutional mediation, policy translation and public governance, and observable outcomes. This finding addresses the study objective by affirming that the primary contribution of living Islam lies not in expanding an inventory of values, but in explaining how values operate, are constrained, change form, or generate effects within social environments marked by friction and contestation. Accordingly, the integrative model developed in this study extends the understanding of living Islam from a descriptive concept to a multilevel mechanistic framework.

At the normative level, these findings extend the literature on *maqāṣid* and *maṣlaḥah* by demonstrating that purposive frameworks should not be understood merely as foundations of justification, but must be traced as mechanisms that move toward dispositions, institutions, procedures, and public outcomes. *Maqāṣid* and *maṣlaḥah* remain important because they reorganize the criteria of public good, harm, and ethical legitimacy amid modern complexity (Ibrahim, [2014](#); Takim, [2014](#)). However, this synthesis also emphasizes that normative renewal becomes transformative only when purposive hermeneutics can connect textual interpretation with historical contexts, moral consequences, and changing grammars of justice that guide action (Duderija, [2014](#)).

These findings also correct the normative tendency to assume that values move automatically from texts into practice. The lived Islam literature shows that ethics becomes disposition, affect, and decision-making logic through situational negotiation constrained by social structures, moral economies, and power relations (Dupret et al., [2012](#); Schielke, [2022](#)). Ethical internalization therefore cannot be understood as a linear process, but as vulnerable and recurrent moral work that depends on the social conditions that make a particular value practicable. In this respect, the synthesis brings together the normative and lived Islam literatures by showing that transformation requires a bridge between ethical justification and the cultivation of capacities for action in everyday life (Dupret et al., [2012](#); Schielke, [2022](#)).

This chain of transformation becomes stronger when values are mediated by institutions. In education, values cannot simply be positioned as moral content, but must be integrated into learning experiences, role modeling, assessment, and policies that organize institutional incentives (Mohamed, [2014](#); Zul et al., [2026](#)). Within communities, collective praxis becomes an infrastructure for change when participation is understood as co-design, capacity strengthening, and internal accountability that enables values to move from discourse into collective action (Fanani & Pohl, [2024](#)). Education and communities are therefore not merely domains of application, but arenas of mediation that determine whether values can endure as habits, procedures, and accountable collective practices.

The clearest operational limits emerge in bioethics because this domain requires auditable decisions under conditions of uncertainty. The maqāṣid framework offers a productive logic of deliberation, but this synthesis shows that purposive elasticity can become practical ambiguity when it is not accompanied by decision protocols, coordination among relevant authorities, and an operational professional language (Padela, [2019](#), [2022](#)). Calls for the renewal of applied Islamic ethics should therefore be understood as demands to move beyond forums of normative debate toward practical instruments that can be used by professions and institutions (Ismail et al., [2022](#); Ramadan, [2013](#)). In this context, transformation occurs only when values cross an operational threshold, that is, when they move from principles into procedures that can be applied, tested, and audited.

In the public sphere, these findings affirm that ethics cannot remain merely a language of virtue, but must be translated into the governance of value conflicts. Issues of human rights, pluralism, and democracy demonstrate that conflicts of authority cannot be resolved through abstract consensus alone, but require mechanisms of regulation, transparency, dispute resolution, and institutional accountability (Moussalli, [2013](#)). The risk of politicizing purposive frameworks reinforces this demand because maqāṣid can become a language of legitimation for power agendas when it is not accompanied by methodological discipline and an evaluation of the distribution of benefits and harms (Helmy, [2021](#)). In the ecological and SDG domains, similar demands become evident when ethics must be incorporated into incentive architectures, impact indicators, and institutional design, including Islamic ethical wealth mechanisms and the framing of sustainable behavior (Mehellou et al., [2023](#); Nisar & Farooq, [2021](#)).

The digital and AI spheres extend this issue into the domain of risk ethics. Maqāṣid-based digital ethics is inadequate when it remains at the level of declarations of principle because the central issues concern information verification, data governance, the distribution of institutional responsibility, and algorithmic bias embedded in platform architectures. The literature on Islamic digital ethics and AI governance indicates an important direction, but it continues to demonstrate the need for models that have been more rigorously validated through empirical research and are testable in real-world situations, particularly when disparities in access and the distribution of risk determine who is most affected (Chaudhary, [2020](#); Kannike & Fahm, [2025](#); Ritonga et al., [2025](#)). The contribution of the integrative model therefore lies in its capacity to connect public ethics and risk ethics within a single multilevel chain of mechanisms.

The theoretical implication of this study is the need to treat living Islam as a mechanism of transformation rather than as an overly broad conceptual umbrella. Its policy implication is that ethical frameworks must be translated into indicators, audit procedures, transparency, and conflict-resolution mechanisms that constrain the politicization of moral language (Helmy, [2021](#); Moussalli, [2013](#)). Its practical implication is that educational institutions, communities, health professions, and digital actors need to design institutional ecologies that enable values to be enacted, evaluated, and continuously improved. The strength of transformation is therefore not determined by the intensity of normative campaigns, but by the capacity to institutionalize co-design processes, accountability, risk governance, and clear impact indicators (Chaudhary, [2020](#); Fanani & Pohl, [2024](#); Mohamed, [2014](#); Zul et al., [2026](#)).

The limitations of this study should be considered in relation to its scope and evidence base. Reliance on Scopus, Web of Science, and targeted hand-searching may have introduced indexing, language, and biases arising from differential document accessibility. The dominance of conceptual works in the corpus also limits inferences regarding empirical effectiveness, while heterogeneity in study designs requires cautious cross-domain comparisons. In addition, variations in the definitions of living/lived Islam create a risk of conceptual inflation and conceptual drift that are difficult to control (Poljarević, [2024](#); Rattani & Hyder, [2019](#)). Future research should focus on testing the proposed multilevel mechanisms while addressing the four gaps identified in the synthesis: establishing operational definitions, tracing the chain from internalization to institutions and policy, evaluating impacts, and analyzing the politicization of authority. Multiple-case studies across contexts can test variations in mechanisms across communities, participatory action research can examine jointly designed and iteratively measured transformation, policy evaluation can assess domains vulnerable to politicization, and mixed-methods approaches can integrate an understanding of moral mechanisms with indicators of institutional outcomes, particularly in bioethics and digital ethics, which require auditable protocols and operational risk governance (Chaudhary, [2020](#); Fanani & Pohl, [2024](#); Padela, [2019](#)).

Conclusion

This synthesis of 57 documents confirms that living Islam functions as a philosophy of transformation when normative frameworks do not remain merely as normative horizons, but are translated into ethical mechanisms that operate across levels. The six thematic clusters reveal a consistent pattern: the renewal of *maqāṣid* and *maṣlaḥah* broadens ethical orientations toward justice, public welfare, human dignity, and sustainability, but its productivity depends on methodological discipline, operational guidelines, and accountability mechanisms capable of constraining politicization and conceptual drift. The corpus also demonstrates that ethics does not emerge automatically from scriptural evidence. It is formed through internalization negotiated in concrete situations, strengthened through collective praxis, and sustained when mediated by institutions, procedures, policies, and auditable risk governance. In education, communities, bioethics, human rights, pluralism, socio-ecological issues, and the digital/AI sphere, transformation becomes evident when values are converted into dispositions, habits, protocols, indicators, and accountable public outcomes.

The resulting integrative conceptual model connects the mechanisms of normative reinterpretation, ethical internalization, collective enactment, institutional mediation, policy translation and public governance, and observable outcomes. The added value of this model lies in its explanation of how change moves from the micro, community, institutional, and policy levels to the global-digital sphere, while also identifying where the chain of transformation frequently breaks down. Four principal gaps require further attention: loose operational definitions of living/lived Islam, discontinuities across levels, limited evaluative designs, and the contestation of authority and politicization of normative frameworks. Future research should test this model through cross-context multiple-case studies, participatory action research, policy evaluation, and mixed-methods approaches that connect internalization processes with institutional outcomes and public impacts, so that transformation claims can be assessed and substantiated, and the underlying mechanisms can be replicated and subjected to accountability.

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Author contributions (CRediT)

Ali Murfi: Conceptualization, Methodology, Resources, Writing – Original Draft. **Ahmad Syafii:** Formal, Resources, Analysis, Validation, Investigation, Writing. **Gatot Prasetyo:** Validation, Investigation, Writing

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The authors declare no competing interests.

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