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Tafaqquh as a Process of Developing Learning Motivation in Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze *tafaqquh* as a process of developing learning motivation in Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122 through a thematic exegesis approach and a dialogue with contemporary theories of learning motivation. It employs a qualitative method with a library research design. The primary data consist of Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122 and selected Qur'anic commentaries chosen purposively, while the secondary data include classical Islamic scholarly works, academic publications, and literature on research methodology and Islamic education. The analysis was conducted in four stages: identifying the context of the verse, conducting a semantic analysis of its key terms, synthesizing its educational themes, and engaging the findings in a conceptual dialogue with theories of motivation. The findings indicate that *tafaqquh* cannot be reduced to the mere acquisition of religious information. Rather, it represents a process of intellectual deepening that requires cognitive engagement, perseverance, internalization, and readiness to overcome learning difficulties. Within the structure of the verse, this process is connected to a normative orientation prior to learning and social responsibility following the learning process. Qur'anic learning motivation can therefore be conceptualized as a multilayered construct comprising meaningful orientation, the deepening of knowledge, and the transformation of knowledge into social benefit. These findings enrich theories of learning motivation by incorporating the dimensions of transcendence and communal responsibility. They also offer implications for Islamic education, suggesting that learning should integrate spiritual purposes, deep learning activities, reflection, and social contribution. Since this study is conceptual, further empirical investigation involving learners and educational institutions is required

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Introduction

In Islam, knowledge is positioned not merely as a collection of information, but as a means of developing human beings capable of understanding truth, guiding actions, and bringing about the common good. Therefore, learning has both epistemological and ethical dimensions (Qorib & Afandi, 2024). Individuals learn not only to acquire knowledge but also to organize their life orientations, make responsible decisions, and benefit others. This perspective is important amid educational problems in which success is often measured primarily by grades, graduation, or academic achievement (Yasmin et al., 2023), while broader educational purposes, such as human development, responsibility, and the common good, may be neglected (Biesta, 2009).

In educational psychology, motivation is understood as a process that directs, initiates, and sustains goal-oriented behavior (O'Shea et al., 2017). Self-determination theory distinguishes autonomous motivation from motivation driven primarily by external pressure; the quality of motivation influences engagement and the continuity of learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Expectancy-value theory also explains that learning persistence is influenced by students' beliefs about their abilities and the value they assign to learning tasks (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Thus, motivation should not be understood merely as a temporary impulse, but as a structure of meaning that makes individuals willing to initiate, sustain, and direct learning activities.

However, modern motivation theories are generally formulated within psychological frameworks that do not always explain transcendence, the orientation toward worship, and social responsibility. The dimensions of meaning and spirituality do not replace psychological explanations but can broaden them. Meaning in life is associated with individuals' ability to connect experiences with larger purposes (Steger et al., 2006), while religion can provide a framework for seeking meaning related to an orientation toward what is considered sacred (Pargament, 2007). More recent research also indicates relationships among meaning in life, self-concept clarity, and academic achievement among adolescents (Meng et al., 2025). In Islamic education, it is necessary to formulate how Qur'anic texts provide a foundation for motivational processes without ahistorically imposing categories from modern psychology onto the text.

Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122 is one verse relevant to examination within this framework. It discusses the distribution of roles within the community of believers: not everyone departs simultaneously; rather, some deepen their understanding of religion and subsequently warn their community (M. Quraish Shihab, 2007). Allah says:

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً ۚ فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنْذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ

> "It is not appropriate for all the believers to go forth together. Why should a group from each community not go forth to deepen their understanding of religion and warn their people when they return to them, so that they may guard themselves?" (Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122)

The verse does not mention learning motivation in the sense used in contemporary psychology. Therefore, its relationship to learning motivation must be formulated as the outcome of an educational analysis of the verse's structure of meaning, rather than as a claim that the verse directly contains modern psychological terminology. The crucial point lies in the sequence of actions constructed by the verse: organizing orientations and roles, the process of tafaqquh, communicating knowledge, and the objective of vigilance and improving community behavior.

Previous studies of learning motivation in Islamic education tend to emphasize the virtues of knowledge, teachers' roles, or the importance of religiosity, whereas educational psychology

research often emphasizes autonomous motivation, self-regulation, engagement, and achievement. Recent studies on Qur'anic tadabbur, exegesis, and Islamic education also demonstrate the importance of connecting interpretation to social issues (Aulia et al., 2025), character, and education (Qorib & Afandi, 2024). Nevertheless, studies specifically mapping tafaqquh as a mechanism for developing learning motivation and explaining the relationships among initial orientation, deepening understanding, and social responsibility remain limited. Nevertheless, studies specifically mapping tafaqquh as a mechanism for developing learning motivation and explaining the relationships among initial orientation, deepening understanding, and social responsibility remain limited.

This study examines how the structure of meaning in Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122 explains the process of developing learning motivation. It subsequently analyzes this construction through dialogue with contemporary theories of learning motivation without eliminating the normative character of the Qur'an. The contribution of this research is to formulate a conceptual model of Qur'anic learning motivation centered on tafaqquh while explaining its implications for Islamic education.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research design. Library research was selected because the research objects are the verse's structure of meaning, its interpretations, and educational concepts derived from written sources. In text-based qualitative research, accuracy depends not only on the number of sources but also on the clarity of the corpus, source-selection criteria, units of analysis, coding process, and synthesis procedures. Therefore, this study combines principles of thematic Qur'anic exegesis with reflexive thematic analysis, emphasizing data familiarization, coding, theme development, theme review, and transparent reporting of interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The thematic exegesis procedure is used to determine the theme, identify relevant textual units, examine the verse's context, collect interpretations, formulate analytical themes, and connect them to educational issues (Musthafa Muslim, 2000).

The primary sources are Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122 and three works of Qur'anic exegesis purposively selected to represent different interpretive approaches: al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr, Tafsir al-Mishbah, and Tafsir al-Azhar. This research does not seek to compare all exegetical works but uses selected interpretations to explain the context, linguistic meanings, distribution of roles, and social objectives of the verse. Limited, purposive selection of exegetical sources is also consistent with recent research emphasizing contextual readings, integration of human dimensions, and educational relevance in exegetical studies (Maryani et al., 2026). Secondary sources consist of journal articles relevant to learning motivation, self-determination, expectancy-value theory, learning engagement, self-regulation, meaning in life, spirituality, and Islamic education, including recent research on tadabbur, meaning in life, and instructional development (Mirza et al., 2026).

The analysis was conducted in four stages. First, contextual analysis involved reading the verse in relation to surrounding verses and the theme of distributing communal responsibilities. Second, keyword analysis focused particularly on li-yatafaqqahū fī al-dīn, li-yundhirū qawmahum, and la'allahum yaḥdharūn. Third, pedagogical coding and categorization mapped initial orientation, learning processes, and social impacts. Fourth, theoretical dialogue compared the interpretation of the verse with contemporary motivation theories. Coding and theme development were iterative: initial themes were reconsidered in light of the verse and its interpretations to avoid imposing psychological categories on the text (Byrne, 2022). To maintain interpretive accuracy, the study distinguishes the textual meaning of the verse, educational implications, and theoretical connections with educational psychology. Recent studies in Islamic education were also used as comparative material to assess pedagogical relevance, not as substitutes for the authority of primary sources (Aulia et al., 2025).

Results and Discussion

1. The Position of Tafaqquh in the Structure of Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122

Contextually, Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122 is not an instruction to learn detached from social life. The verse concerns the distribution of responsibilities (Shihab, 2002). Not all community members perform the same tasks at the same time; some undertake defense duties, while others deepen their knowledge and return to provide warnings. This structure shows that learning is recognized as a collective need rather than merely an individual concern.

The word tafaqquh derives from the root fa-qa-ha, associated with deep understanding. The tafa''ala form suggests a process pursued gradually and intensively (Ibn 'Ashur, 1984). Therefore, tafaqquh is more appropriately translated as deepening understanding rather than merely receiving information. In the context of the verse, its object is al-dīn, but its pedagogical implications can be formulated as a learning process connecting knowledge, understanding, internalization, and orientation toward action.

This reading does not seek to indiscriminately expand al-dīn to encompass every field of knowledge, nor to restrict it to memorizing religious laws. The emphasis is on the nature of the process: learning is undertaken seriously and progressively and directed toward the ability to provide guidance. Thus, tafaqquh becomes a link between cognitive activity and ethical responsibility.

2. Three Stages of Developing Learning Motivation

The analysis identifies three interrelated stages. The term intention in the first stage is an educational category derived from the goal orientation within the verse's structure, not a claim that the word niyyah is literally mentioned in Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122.

Table 1. Stages of learning motivation in Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122.

Stage	Textual indicator	Educational meaning	Form of motivation
Orientation and role distribution	*Wa mā kāna al-mu'minūna li-yanfirū kāffah*; *fa-lawlā nafara min kulli firqah minhum ṭā'ifah*	Establishing learning goals, roles, and reasons within collective responsibility	Meaning-based motivation and goal orientation
Deepening (tafaqquh)	*Li-yatafaqqahū fī al-dīn*	Deep, persistent, reflective, and continuous learning	Autonomous motivation, cognitive engagement, and self-regulation
Communication and benefit	*Wa li-yundhirū qawmahum*; *la'allahum yaḥdharūn*	Transforming knowledge into guidance, improvement, and social benefit	Prosocial motivation and social responsibility

These three stages form a cycle. Meaningful orientation encourages individuals to enter the process of tafaqquh. Successful deepening produces the ability to explain and guide (Hamka, 2015). Social benefit subsequently reinforces the meaning of learning and encourages its continuation. This model differs from understandings of motivation that position rewards or punishments as the primary drivers.

3. Meaning Orientation as the Starting Point

The opening of the verse teaches that learning must be situated within a clear structure of

goals. The community is not directed to undertake one activity uniformly but to distribute roles according to needs. From an educational perspective, this distribution offers two lessons. First, learning is an activity of strategic value for the continuity of the community (Al-Zarnuji, 2004). Second, learning motivation becomes stronger when students understand the reasons for and contributions of the activities they undertake.

This finding is consistent with expectancy-value theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Students tend to demonstrate effort and persistence when they regard tasks as valuable and believe their efforts can produce meaningful achievements (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Within a Qur'anic framework, such value extends beyond individual benefit to service and the common good. Transcendent orientation provides direction, while social orientation explains why knowledge must be acquired and used.

Thus, Islamic education cannot simply instruct students to "study diligently." Education must explain why knowledge is studied, who will benefit, and what responsibilities accompany mastery of knowledge. Learning that loses its purpose can easily become an administrative activity. Conversely, meaningful learning can foster more stable commitment.

4. *Tafaqquh as Deep Learning Engagement*

The central stage in the verse is li-yatafaqqahū fī al-dīn. Educationally, tafaqquh indicates that motivation not only exists before learning but is also formed during the learning process. A person may begin learning because of a particular impetus, but persistence, strategies, and depth of understanding develop through interactions with materials, teachers, communities, and learning experiences.

This interpretation is close to the concept of autonomous motivation. Autonomous motivation does not mean learning without direction; rather, it means experiencing learning as valuable and consciously endorsed (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Support for autonomy, clear learning structures, and positive pedagogical relationships can increase student engagement (Jang et al., 2010). Within the tafaqquh framework, freedom in learning must be accompanied by discipline, guidance, and willingness to pursue deeper understanding.

Tafaqquh is also related to self-regulation. Deepening understanding requires students to set goals, select strategies, monitor comprehension, overcome difficulties, and evaluate learning outcomes. Self-regulation is an important element in explaining why students with relatively similar abilities may achieve different results (Panadero, 2017). Therefore, tafaqquh-based education should teach not only content but also how to read, question, reason, review, discuss, and reflect on knowledge.

The learning engagement concerned is also multidimensional. Behavioral engagement appears in attendance and effort; cognitive engagement in comprehension strategies; emotional engagement in a sense of belonging and interest; and agentic engagement when students take the initiative to ask questions and offer ideas (Fredricks et al., 2004). Thus, tafaqquh can be understood as a process of learning engagement integrating cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions.

5. Communicating Knowledge as Prosocial Motivation

The verse does not end the learning process with mastery of knowledge. Those who undertake tafaqquh are responsible for warning their people upon returning. This task affirms that knowledge has a social orientation. Knowledge that is never communicated, practiced, or used to improve life has not fully achieved the aims of education.

This dimension can be discussed in relation to prosocial motivation. Students learn not only for grades or personal advancement but also because they recognize that knowledge can help others. Prosocial orientation can strengthen persistence because learning activities are understood to have tangible beneficiaries (Bolino & Grant, 2016). Within the verse's framework, those beneficiaries are the community, which is expected to become more vigilant

and able to protect itself.

Communicating knowledge also functions as a form of generative learning. When individuals must explain knowledge to others, they need to reorganize concepts, choose language, answer questions, and connect knowledge to concrete situations. Therefore, teaching or presenting learning outcomes is not merely a final stage but can deepen understanding. Research on engagement and academic achievement shows that motivation quality, learning strategies, and engagement are interconnected in producing educational outcomes (Mega et al., 2014).

However, communicating knowledge must not be understood as legitimizing speech without competence. The word tafaqquh precedes the duty to warn. This sequence contains a principle of academic ethics: responsibility for communicating knowledge must be supported by adequate learning, correct understanding, and awareness of the audience's context. In contemporary education, this principle relates to source literacy, argumentation skills, information verification, and communication ethics.

6. Synthesis with Contemporary Motivation Theories

The dialogue between Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122 and contemporary motivation theories yields several findings. First, the verse is consistent with the view that motivation is related to goals and meaning (Sarnoto & Abnisa, 2022). Second, the concept of tafaqquh extends motivation to include deep engagement and self-regulation. Third, the duty to communicate knowledge adds a prosocial dimension that is not always central to individual motivation theories.

Table 2. Qur'anic dimensions and conceptual equivalents

Qur'anic dimension	Conceptual equivalent	Analytical emphasis
Goal orientation and responsibility	Task value, meaning, autonomous motivation	Learning is understood as a valuable activity, not merely an external obligation
Tafaqquh	Cognitive engagement and self-regulation	Motivation is sustained through deepening, strategies, and persistence
Indhār and benefit	Prosocial motivation and social engagement	Knowledge is directed toward behavioral change and the common good
Yaḥdharūn	Transformative objectives	Learning success is measured through understanding and change, not memorization alone

The verse cannot simply be equated with self-determination theory. That theory emerged from the tradition of empirical psychology, whereas the verse originates in a framework of revelation and religious responsibility. The relationship that can be established is dialogical: psychological theory helps explain mechanisms of learning engagement, while the verse provides a horizon of meaning, transcendence, and social responsibility. In this way, the integration of knowledge does not erase epistemological differences between exegesis and psychology.

7. Implications for Islamic Education

First, learning objectives should combine knowledge attainment and meaning. Teachers should not only communicate competencies but also explain the relevance of learning materials to life, worship, justice, and the common good. Clarity of purpose can increase task value and help students connect learning materials to their life goals.

Second, instructional strategies should provide room for tafaqquh. Problem-based learning, textual discussions, critical reading, case studies, reflective journals, and explanatory

projects can be used to develop deep understanding. Such models are more consistent with the nature of tafaqquh than instruction emphasizing memorization alone.

Third, assessment should measure processes and impacts. In addition to knowledge tests, assessments can include the quality of argumentation, the ability to connect religious evidence with context, reflection, collaborative work, and the ability to communicate ideas responsibly. Such assessment is consistent with the understanding that learning engagement has behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and agentic dimensions (Schoor & Bannert, 2011).

Fourth, Islamic education should build a learning ecosystem that supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Teacher support, clear task structures, constructive feedback, and a safe classroom atmosphere can improve motivation and engagement (Prananto et al., 2025). Spiritual values should be present as internalized orientations rather than mere pressure or slogans.

Fifth, social tasks should be designed proportionately. Students may be asked to prepare educational materials, develop source-based presentations, undertake simple community service, or explain concepts to peers. However, such tasks must be preceded by sufficient knowledge preparation and supervision to prevent oversimplification, inaccurate religious claims, or the spread of unverified information.

In the context of Indonesian Islamic education, integrating religious values with social responsibility is also consistent with trends in Islamic exegesis and thought that connect revelation with human concerns, science, and societal progress (Fanani et al., 2021). Thus, tafaqquh can be developed not as nostalgia for the past but as a pedagogical principle for forming persistent, reflective, ethical, and beneficial learners.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that tafaqquh in Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]:122 can be understood as the central process in developing learning motivation. The verse constructs an educational sequence comprising goal orientation and distribution of responsibilities, persistent deepening of knowledge, and communication of knowledge for social benefit. In this study, intention is understood as an analytical category explaining goal orientation, not as a word literally mentioned in the verse.

Tafaqquh is not equivalent to receiving information. It encompasses cognitive engagement, self-regulation, internalization, and readiness to face difficulties. Meanwhile, the duty to warn indicates that learning outcomes must move beyond the personal domain toward social responsibility. This construction broadens learning motivation theory by adding dimensions of transcendence, meaning, and communal benefit.

In practice, Islamic education needs to design learning that explains purposes and meanings, provides opportunities for deeper understanding, develops self-regulation, and enables students to use knowledge responsibly. This study remains conceptual and based on library research. Further research should develop instruments to measure dimensions of tafaqquh motivation and test the model in madrasahs, schools, Islamic boarding schools, and higher education institutions.

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