JIPSI: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Sains Islam Interdisipiner
Vol. 5, No. 4, November 2026, pp. 4858-4870
http://journal.amorfati.id/index.php/jipsi || ISSN 2962-9187

Interdisciplinary Scope of Science and Education, Islamic Education and Science, Integration of Science and Islam, Islamic Thought and Philosophy, Integration of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Islamic Studies, Islamic Economics and Business Studies, and Islamic Ethics in Science and Technology

Epistemological Demarcation And The Harmonization Of Theory And Qualitative Methods In Tafsir Studies

Mohammad Nizar [a,1,*]; Muhammad Hariyadi [a,2,*]

*ab Universitas PTIQ Jakarta, Indonesia

[1]Mohammadnizar@mhs.ptiq.ac.id

*Corresponding Author; Mohammad Nizar

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received:
13-08-2026
Revised:
25-10-2026
Accepted:
15-11-2026

Keywords
Qur'anic Exegesis
Methodology
Epistemological Demarcation
Theory and Method
Qualitative Qur'anic Research
Tafsir Research Models

ABSTRACT

Qualitative Qur'anic exegesis research requires conceptual consistency among methodology, theory, and method, yet their boundaries are not always made explicit in research guidance. This article examines their epistemological distinctions and develops a practical alignment framework for qualitative tafsir studies. Using qualitative library research and an interpretive, descriptive comparison of methodological literature, institutional guidance from PTIQ and UIN Sunan Kalijaga, and an illustrative dissertation, the study distinguishes methodology as the epistemological justification of inquiry, theory as an interpretive lens, and method as operational procedure. Five research orientations—thematic-contextual, empirical-response, figure study, methodological development, and comparative-interdisciplinary—are organized analytically from the typologies and examples discussed in the reviewed guidelines; they are not presented as empirically validated categories. The article's contribution is an explicit decision sequence connecting the research problem, epistemological assumptions, analytical perspective, research design, and data procedures. This synthesis offers a heuristic for improving the transparency and coherence of tafsir research proposals. Its practical effectiveness remains to be examined through applications to completed exegetical projects.

This is an open-access article under the CC–BY-SA license.

Introduction

A well-known expression among academics is aṭ-ṭarīqatu ahammu min al-māddati, which may be understood as emphasizing the urgency of method over the substance of the material under discussion. Although this statement is not an absolute truth and may be no more than an expression, it nevertheless highlights an important point: every researcher is required to understand a method, which may be likened to the path taken to reach a particular destination.

In this sense, a method is certainly no less important than the substantive content of a study. (Baidan & Azis, 2015, p. 9)

In essence, research method is a scientific way of obtaining data for particular purposes and uses. The term scientific means that research activities must be grounded in rational, empirical, and systematic characteristics. Rational means that research must be conducted through procedures that are reasonable and logically intelligible. Empirical means that the research process can be observed through human senses so that its procedures can also be observed and understood by others. Systematic means that the processes involved in research must be logical. (Nasution, 2023, p. 1; Sugiyono, 2013, p. 2)

In terms of definition and application, method is not the same as methodology. Methodology is an overall framework connected to a particular paradigm or theoretical perspective that guides the entire research process. It encompasses the theoretical framework, research design, research approach, and the rational basis underlying the selection of particular instruments. By contrast, method operates at the technical and operational level, referring to specific techniques, procedures, or tools systematically applied for sampling, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of findings, such as surveys, interviews, experiments, or statistical analysis. The two stand in a functional hierarchical relationship: methodology serves as the conceptual umbrella that determines the direction of scientific inquiry, whereas method operates within that framework to execute measurable data collection and analysis. (Aguiar, 2024, pp. 20–24) (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

In addition to differing from methodology, method also differs from theory in both definition and scope. Theory can generally be understood as a set of scientifically grounded ideas, concepts, explanations, or predictions. Theory is also important in research because it provides comprehensive conceptual understanding, directs research from a particular perspective, focuses attention on relevant data, and formulates the research framework. When the three are considered together, methodology may be understood as the theory of a method, with the three being interconnected in formulating, shaping, and directing research toward its intended results. (Sembiring et al., 2024, pp. 54–55)

The importance of research methodology, which encompasses theory and method, must be considered in every type of research, including studies of the Qur'an and Tafsir. Without a solid methodological foundation, research in this field is vulnerable to becoming merely a compilation of descriptive classical narratives (taqlīd) without a clear and systematic epistemological contribution. Academic realities, on the other hand, indicate that a major obstacle faced by students and researchers at various levels from undergraduate to doctoral study stems precisely from weak methodological mastery. This problem is not caused by the absence of theories and methods, but rather by the scattered nature of exegetical research principles and procedures across general humanities literature and the scarcity of specialized references that codify them in an integrated manner, leaving researchers to navigate their studies without adequate guidance. When this occurs, the consequences can be serious because research may fail to reach its intended destination or may have to repeat its procedures from the beginning because of systematic errors in the process. Such conditions often occur among academics during the completion of their studies, potentially leading to frustration and even dropping out. (Baidan & Azis, 2015, pp. 10–11)

In response to such problems, several educational institutions have developed guidelines for writing final academic projects. These institutional guidelines emphasize that research theory and method are not merely technical formalities, but structured scientific procedures requiring completeness in four principal aspects: clarity of data sources (a rigid distinction between primary and secondary data), techniques for data collection and verification of validity and reliability, data-management procedures, and data analysis based on explicit theoretical application. Nevertheless, these administrative-institutional guidelines essentially provide a descriptive-normative format concerning what must be included structurally, rather than how it should be operated conceptually and epistemologically. Academics still face a gap

in practical guidance: how to understand the essential boundary between theory and method with methodology positioned as the overarching framework and how to translate conceptual theory into instruments of exegetical analysis without conflating these technical terms. (Tim Penyusun Pascasarjana PTIQ, 2017, pp. 9–13)

This article addresses a narrower methodological gap than the general observation that theory and method differ. Existing institutional guides specify required proposal components and offer models of thesis organization, while general qualitative manuals discuss paradigms and techniques; neither, in the materials examined here, provides an explicit tafsir-specific decision sequence for translating an exegetical problem into epistemological commitments, an analytical lens, and defensible data procedures. This is a gap in operational integration rather than evidence that earlier studies are universally methodologically deficient. The study therefore asks: (1) How can methodology, theory, and method be distinguished epistemologically in qualitative tafsir research? (2) How can the five research orientations discussed in the institutional and exegetical literature be organized into a coherent framework? (3) What criteria can guide the alignment of research problems, theoretical perspectives, qualitative designs, and analysis techniques? The proposed novelty is a critical synthesis and decision-oriented alignment framework, not the discovery or empirical validation of five new research types. This contribution draws on debates about interpretive assumptions, research quality, and Qur'anic contextual interpretation (Tracy, 2010; Saeed, 2006; Sinai, 2017).

Method

This study employs qualitative library research with descriptive-interpretive and comparative conceptual analysis. Its documentary corpus comprises the PTIQ postgraduate thesis and dissertation guide (2017), the UIN Sunan Kalijaga Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought guide (2022), specialized tafsir research literature, general qualitative methodology works, and the previously identified illustrative dissertation (Romdhon, 2025). The two institutional guides are selected purposively because both directly regulate research writing in institutional contexts relevant to Qur'anic and tafsir scholarship, while differing in institutional setting and the presentation of research guidance. They are treated as illustrative normative documents, not as a representative sample of Indonesian universities. This is a focused conceptual review rather than a systematic or exhaustive literature review (Snyder, 2019).

Sources were selected for direct relevance to at least one of four topics: epistemological distinctions, qualitative design and analytic procedures, Qur'anic interpretation, or institutional requirements for tafsir-related academic writing. Foundational works were retained where conceptually necessary, and more recent international methodological scholarship was incorporated to strengthen the analytical dialogue. Source identification drew on the bibliography and named works already used in the manuscript and on targeted supplementary scholarly literature. Because the original research record does not document databases searched, search dates, search strings, screening totals, or exclusion counts, this article does not claim a reproducible systematic-search protocol. The corpus and its limitations are instead reported transparently, and the reference list identifies the works used in the revised synthesis.

The analysis proceeded through four conceptual operations: first, extracting definitions and stated functions of methodology, theory, and method; second, comparing institutional prescriptions with broader qualitative-research principles; third, grouping the five orientations described in the PTIQ guide and specialized tafsir literature by their principal object and research purpose; and fourth, mapping each orientation against plausible theoretical lenses, research designs, and data-analysis procedures. The resulting typology is a secondary analytical organization of existing models rather than a classification independently established by field observation. Interpretations were checked for consistency against the cited

documents and the Romdhon (2025) example. The analysis is interpretive and illustrative, without inter-coder reliability claims or empirical testing (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Romdhon's (2025) dissertation, Peradaban Ekologis dan Berkelanjutan Perspektif Al-Qur'an, serves only as an illustrative case for explaining the relationship between assumptions, concepts, constructs, and generalization. It is not treated as an independent validation sample. Accordingly, the findings support a reasoned conceptual proposal and cannot establish the effectiveness or generalizability of the proposed framework across actual tafsir projects.

Results and Discussion

Epistemological Demarcation and Scope: Theory, Method, and Methodology

One of the most fundamental errors frequently encountered among researchers, from beginners to doctoral-level scholars in the humanities and religious studies, is the overlapping treatment of the terms theory, method, and methodology as though the three were interchangeable. This terminological confusion has serious consequences because the absence of clear boundaries obscures the foundation of research, weakens the validity of findings, and risks derailing the direction of scientific inquiry. To address this problem, clear distinctions must first be established before the relationships among the three can be understood. (Aguiar, 2024, pp. 20–21; Chan & Clarke, n.d., pp. 2–5)

1. Methodology as an Epistemological Bridge

The word methodology originates from the Greek methodos (way, path) and logos (science, knowledge), which entered English as methodology, meaning the science of methods or knowledge concerning procedures for seeking scientific truth. In this regard, methodology operates within a philosophical-epistemological domain (epistemological location) that examines basic assumptions concerning the nature of reality (ontology) and the means of attaining truth (epistemology). (Sembiring et al., 2024, p. 1; Baidan & Azis, 2015, pp. 16–17; Yin, 2016, p. 15)

On the basis of this understanding, methodology occupies a central position as an epistemological bridge connecting a researcher's paradigm of thought with the theoretical framework that encompasses it. Drawing on Noeng Muhadjir's dialectical perspective, researcher integrity requires three dimensions of awareness: (1) philosophical awareness (understanding the philosophy-of-science school underlying the work), (2) theoretical awareness (understanding the substantive theory or conceptual model employed), and (3) technical awareness (mastering instruments and technical management in the field). Methodology is the philosophical umbrella that guides the determination of research direction, considers the strengths and weaknesses of different modes of inquiry, and provides a rational basis for why a particular technique is selected. (Berutu, 2017, p. 1; Aguiar, 2024, pp. 22–23)

The fundamental substance of a methodology is determined by the level of reality that a study seeks to reach. Noeng Muhadjir divides reality into four levels: (1) Sensual Empirical Reality, in which sensory physical facts can be measured and mechanically observed; (2) Logical Empirical Reality, in which rational order and logical relations among propositions can be traced through reasoning; (3) Ethical Empirical Reality, in which moral and axiological appreciation requires the involvement of ethical consciousness; and (4) Transcendent Empirical Reality, which encompasses supernatural truth, divine revelation, and transcendent religious dimensions. (Berutu, 2017, pp. 15–16)

Classical positivism, formulated by Auguste Comte, reduces scientific truth to sensual empirical reality and absolutizes the principle of value freedom. By contrast, methodology in Qur'anic and Tafsir research is directly related to divine revelation and operates within

the humanities, which likewise seeks a more humane human life. Therefore, Tafsir research methodology rejects mechanistic value-free reductionism; instead, it requires an approach integrating rational reasoning, objective truth, and argumentative accountability rooted in Qur'anic consciousness namely, rational, objective, and argumentative thinking. (Baidan & Azis, pp. 1–13)

2. Method, Scope, and Fundamental Substance

If methodology occupies the domain of conceptual-philosophical consideration (why), method (ṭarīqah or manhaj) operates at the practical-operational level (how). Method refers to scientific procedures, techniques, and particular processes systematically deployed to execute research stages, from sample selection, raw-data collection, and coding to analysis and interpretation of findings. In qualitative research, method focuses on technical instruments such as observation, in-depth interviews, literature tracing, and field documentation. Reducing methodology to merely technical methods is a serious error that strips a research work of its philosophical weight and scientific accountability. (Baidan & Azis, 2015, p. 18; Sugiyono, 2013, p. 2; Nasution, 2023, p. 1)

The fundamental substance of qualitative method is rooted in its naturalistic, analytically descriptive, processual, inductive character and its emphasis on the search for meaning. In its execution, the principal research instrument is not a rigid questionnaire but the researcher as a human instrument, who is required to possess adequate theoretical preparation and broad insight so as to be able to ask questions, analyze, observe, and construct the social situation under study in a clearer and more meaningful way. (Nasution, 2023, pp. 21–22; Sugiyono, 2013, p. 8)

3. Theory, Scope, and Fundamental Substance

Theory is essentially defined as a set of constructs, concepts, definitions, and propositions that are logically related and systematically organized to provide a comprehensive view of a phenomenon by detailing relationships among variables, with the purposes of explaining, predicting, and controlling that phenomenon. In simple terms, theory can be understood by researchers as a tool for dissecting and analyzing the academic problems they face and seek to solve. (Sugiyono, 2013, pp. 52–54; Tim Penyusun Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Pemikiran Islam UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2022, p. 3)

Theory is not an instrument for collecting physical data, but a system of ideas that serves as a conceptual lens. As Thomas Kuhn has argued, human observation is fundamentally theory-laden, meaning that understanding of reality is always influenced by the pre-existing knowledge schema within the researcher's consciousness. Theory can hardly be separated from research because it is almost impossible to achieve a completely objective and neutral perception of an object; in other words, perception is always connected to a particular perspective. This fact is also highly beneficial because theory directs the focus of research and filters out matters unrelated to the study, preventing data from accumulating without direction. The fundamental substance of theory consists of four essential components: (Sembiring et al., 2024, pp. 54–55) (Gadamer, 2004; Ricoeur, 1976)

a. Concept: an abstraction of empirical phenomena or objective reality in symbolic form, such as texts, manuscripts, chains of transmission (sanad), and traditions.

b. Construct: a concept deliberately formed and operationally defined for a specific analytical purpose.

c. Assumption: a basic presupposition or philosophical proposition accepted as true without requiring direct empirical verification.

d. Generalization: a proposition concerning relationships among concepts, ranging from working hypotheses and scientific principles to universal laws.

As an example, consider the dissertation written by Muhammad Rizqi Romdhon (2025), entitled Peradaban Ekologis dan Berkelanjutan Perspektif Al-Qur'an. The following presents an account of the theoretical components (assumptions, concepts, constructs, and generalizations) of that dissertation: (Romdhon, 2025)

c. Assumption: The Qur'an contains fundamental principles concerning the governance of an environmentally oriented and sustainable civilization. Human beings hold the mandate of khalîfatullâh and bear full responsibility for creating harmonious relations with the universe, caring for the earth, and balancing worldly and hereafter-oriented interests for the benefit of future generations.

a. Concept: Key terms include Quranic Ecocivilization (Qur'anic Eco-Civilization), ecological civilization, sustainable civilization, al-syahâdah (civilizational exemplary conduct), al-isti'mâr (civilizational development), al-tamkîn (civilizational management), al-qarâr (civilizational stability), and al-wasathiyyah (moderation).

b. Construct: The operationalization of theoretical concepts into variables for exegetical analysis, comprising: (1) the Five Civilizational Indicators (al-syahâdah, al-isti'mâr, al-tamkîn, al-qarâr, and al-wasathiyyah); and (2) the Three Main Principles of Ecological and Sustainable Civilization (humans as responsible khalîfatullâh, environmental preservation, and fair and universal sustainable development).

d. Generalization: The substantive theoretical conclusion that "Ecological and Sustainable Civilization or Quranic Ecocivilization is a human way of life in which people, as responsible khalîfatullâh, create harmonious relations with nature, realize universal values of goodness and justice, develop the earth sustainably, and create social stability that balances worldly and hereafter-oriented dimensions for the benefit of future generations."

To facilitate a more detailed distinction among the three entities, the following table presents the demarcation of methodology, method, and theory:

Distinguishing Parameter	Theory	Methodology	Method
Conceptual Nature	A set of concepts, propositions, and logical principles used to explain and predict phenomena.	Philosophical knowledge of procedures and the epistemological framework of research.	Procedures, measurable techniques, and operational instruments for data collection and analysis.
Operational Level	Conceptual, abstract, and substantive.	Paradigmatic, philosophical, and epistemological.	Practical, technical, and empirical/textual.
Structural Function	Serves as an analytical lens, limits the scope of facts,	Justifies the validity of the scientific inquiry route and aligns the	Executes sampling, data recording,

	and provides explanations of meaning.	paradigm with the research design.	coding, and data comparison.
Guiding Question	Why does the phenomenon occur and what is its principle of meaning?	On what epistemological basis is this mode of inquiry valid and accountable?	How are data collected, processed, and presented systematically?

Practical Guidelines for Selecting and Aligning Qualitative Theory and Methods in Qur'anic and Tafsir Studies

The vulnerability of academic research in Qur'anic and Tafsir studies is rooted in methodological misunderstanding: the exegetical problem addressed in a study does not correspond to the theory (analytical lens) employed, or the method used fails to capture the required data and analysis. To overcome this problem, research must begin with a coherent design process grounded in a deep understanding of the problem before the appropriate theory and method are determined. (Aguiar, 2024, p. 21; Baidan & Azis, 2015, pp. 9–10) The framework can be applied as a sequence of methodological decisions: specify the textual, historical, or social research problem; state the epistemological status of the Qur'anic text and the object being investigated; identify the analytical concepts and their interpretive limits; select a design consistent with the research question; and document how texts, participants, or observations will be selected, analyzed, and checked. This sequence is an analytical synthesis informed by qualitative research quality criteria (Tracy, 2010) and by the interpretive and contextual concerns of Qur'anic studies (Saeed, 2006; Sinai, 2017).

1. Problem Identification in Qur'anic and Tafsir Studies

The initial step that must be taken in research particularly when selecting the theory and method is to identify the problem carefully. A research problem should arise from an academic concern that is subsequently elaborated so that the clarity and urgency of the issue become evident. Whether formulated as a question or a statement, the research problem is crucial because it is directly related to the purpose, nature, design, type, and method of the research to be undertaken. A problem is not merely an ordinary question; rather, it involves a gap between das Sollen (what ought to be, normative expectations, or the wording of revelation) and das Sein (empirical reality, social behavior, or a concrete exegetical problem). (Tim Penyusun Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Pemikiran Islam UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2022, p. 3; Tim Penyusun Pascasarjana PTIQ, 2017, p. 5; Prawanti et al., 2025; Baidan & Azis, 2015, pp. 60–61) (Rahman, 2009; Saeed, 2006)

As an illustration, Romdhon's dissertation shows that the das Sein addressed is the current condition of the world, which is experiencing an ecological crisis due to climate change, global warming, excessive exploitation of natural resources, and weaknesses in unsustainable modern development models. Conversely, the das Sollen in that study is the ideal order and normative values that should be upheld from the Qur'anic perspective through the concept of Quranic Ecocivilization. (Romdhon, 2025)

Based on the explanation above, a "problem" or "research problem" in academic studies of the Qur'an and Tafsir refers to a gap between empirical reality and the meanings or indications contained in the Qur'an. Clearly understanding this gap constitutes the initial stage in selecting the theory and method for the qualitative research to be conducted.

After identifying the problem, researchers in Qur'anic and Tafsir studies need to understand the research models they intend to employ. One possible model is the thematic-contextual model, which focuses on examining Qur'anic verses concerning a particular theme and subsequently applying them to modern realities. This model examines the problem theoretically and empirically, explores the Qur'anic perspective on the theme, and then analyzes it in relation to contemporary reality. The writing structure for this model generally includes an introduction, a theoretical and empirical explanation of the problem, analysis of Qur'anic concepts, contextual analysis, and a conclusion. (Tim Penyusun Pascasarjana PTIQ, 2017, pp. 24–27; Baidan & Azis, 2015, pp. 42–47)

In addition, there is the empirical-response model, designed to examine real-world social phenomena or problems and respond to them using a normative Qur'anic perspective. Through this model, researchers portray factual issues in society such as sanctions for property-related crimes or corruption and analyze them on the basis of Qur'anic laws and values. The usual chapter framework consists of an introduction, a general discussion of the empirical problem under study, a review of sanctions or the Qur'anic view of the offense, various alternative solutions or sanctions, and a conclusion. (Tim Penyusun Pascasarjana PTIQ, 2017, pp. 24–27)

Another research model is the figure-study model (biography and thought analysis), which focuses on the methodology, exegetical style, or epistemological structure of a particular exegete's thought. This model is highly relevant for examining the implications of applying a particular method such as the maqāṣidī method in understanding legal verses of the Qur'an. The usual structure consists of an introduction, the figure's biography and intellectual background, the basic methodological concepts of the figure, analysis of the application of the method to a Qur'anic verse case study, implications of the interpretation for the relevant field, and a conclusion. (Tim Penyusun Pascasarjana PTIQ, 2017, pp. 24–27)

Researchers may also choose a methodological-development model (methodological discovery), which aims to formulate, discover, or propose new approaches and methods either in the discipline of Tafsir or in Islamic education. This model relies on tracing the history and development of existing methods and then presenting a new methodological finding together with its simulation. In detail, its chapter structure includes an introduction, the historical development of methods of interpretation or education, presentation of the new method, practical application of the method in interpretation or teaching and learning, and a conclusion. (Tim Penyusun Pascasarjana PTIQ, 2017, pp. 24–27)

Finally, there is the comparative and interdisciplinary model, which requires strong and relevant reasons for comparing two intellectual entities or integrating Tafsir with another discipline. This model has various forms, ranging from comparisons of classical and modern exegetes (such as Ibn Kathir and Muhammad Abduh), comparisons of exegetes with different ideological orientations (such as the interpretations of al-Ṭabarī and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad), to the integration of Tafsir with science, positive law, or solutions to global issues such as environmental degradation. In general, the chapter pattern for comparative research includes an introduction, the profile or discourse of each perspective being compared, analysis of points of convergence and divergence (or forms of interdisciplinary synergy), and a conclusion. (Tim Penyusun Pascasarjana PTIQ, 2017, pp. 24–27)

Derivation and status of the five models. These five orientations were not generated through statistical clustering or an independent empirical survey. They were reconstructed from the chapter patterns and purposes described in the PTIQ postgraduate guide (2017, pp. 24–27) and read alongside Baidan and Azis (2015). The organizing dimensions were (a) primary object of inquiry—theme, social problem, exegete, method, or competing perspectives—and (b) principal

analytical purpose—contextualization, normative response, intellectual reconstruction, methodological development, or comparison/integration. The labels function as heuristic categories: a single project may combine orientations, and the typology is neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. This explicit derivation clarifies what the present article adds: a transparent rationale for selecting and aligning the existing orientations, rather than a claim to have originated them.

2. Selection and Differentiation of Theory

In qualitative research, the position and function of theory fundamentally depend on the research objectives pursued by the researcher, with theory serving as an aid for understanding or interpreting the social reality under study. Based on the orientation of the objective, the function of theory can be classified into several main forms. When research aims to explore or describe, theory functions flexibly to help recognize, understand, and interpret the complexity of social reality in the field. When research is directed toward explaining, theory assumes a stronger position as the basis for explaining social phenomena, often being translated into substantive propositions or hypotheses to be tested. When the objective is to understand in depth, theory serves as an interpretive lens for capturing meaning behind social reality, whereas when the objective is to predict, theory provides a rational foundation for developing predictions or projections concerning the phenomenon under study. (Tim Penyusun Pascasarjana PTIQ, 2017, p. 10)

In selecting a theoretical foundation for examining exegetical problems, researchers must consider established criteria: relevance (the theory fits the substance of the variables or focus under study), currency (the theory has scientific novelty and responds to contemporary developments), and authenticity (direct reference to the primary source or original work of its originator rather than a quotation from a quotation). (Sugiyono, 2013, p. 59; Nasution, 2023, pp. 166–167)

Critical evaluation in selecting theory should address three evaluative aspects: (Wiraguna et al., 2024, p. 50)

- Epistemological aspect: examining whether the theoretical foundation and structure of knowledge are coherent and do not impose a secular paradigm that distorts the sacred character of revelation.
- Relevance and utility aspect: ensuring that the theory has practical value in providing a scientific explanation of contemporary exegetical problems, rather than serving merely as theoretical ornamentation that complicates the discussion.
- Parsimony (practicality) aspect: emphasizing a simple, robust, and measurable logical flow; convoluted and speculative theoretical reasoning should be avoided to maintain clarity in the analysis of exegetical data.

3. Alignment of Qualitative Research Designs

After the exegetical problem has been differentiated and the theory established, the researcher must align it with an appropriate qualitative approach:

- Pure Library Research: applied when all data sources are derived from written exegetical materials (mushafs, Tafsir books, manuscripts, and historical documents). This approach uses bibliographic cards or quotation cards to record reference data systematically.
- Historical Research and Biography: applied to reconstruct the thought of an exegete or the dynamics of an interpretive school in the past objectively and systematically through heuristic steps, external and internal source criticism, interpretation, and historiography.

- Phenomenology: applied to study lived religious experiences and the subjective engagement of communities with Qur'anic verses, such as the spiritual tranquility of Qur'an readers or the motivations of ruqyah practitioners. It operates through bracketing (suspending the researcher's initial assumptions) and the preparation of Individual Textural Descriptions (ITD) to capture the essential structures of noema and noesis. (Creswell & Poth, 2018)
- Ethnography and Symbolic Interactionism: applied to investigate Qur'anic cultural practices institutionalized within a social community, such as khataman, yasinan, and Maulid commemorations.
- Case Study: applied to investigate in depth a contemporary exegetical phenomenon within a real-life context bounded by space and time (bounded system). Robert K. Yin emphasizes that a case study is selected when the questions focus on "how" and "why," the researcher has no control over social events, and the focus of inquiry is on contemporary reality.
- Grounded Theory: applied when the researcher seeks to formulate a new concept or substantive theory inductively from the ground concerning community responses to the Qur'an for which no established theory previously exists.

These designs are not interchangeable with the five tafsir orientations. An orientation describes the substantive purpose of inquiry, whereas a design specifies the logic for producing and interpreting evidence. For example, a figure study may employ historical-documentary analysis, while an empirical-response inquiry may require ethnography or a bounded case study if its claims concern lived practice. The choice must follow the question and available evidence, not the appeal of a methodological label (Yin, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

4. Alignment of Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

In Tafsir library research, data are collected by tracing the occurrence of verses in the mushaf using index works such as al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfâzh al-Qur'an al-Karîm by Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abd al-Baqi, selecting and tabulating verses chronologically according to the order of revelation to identify nâsikh-mansûkh, and referring to authoritative Tafsir works. (Baidan & Azis, 2015, pp. 80–100)

In field research (living Qur'an), data are collected through technique triangulation: participant observation (passive, moderate, active, and complete), in-depth interviews (structured, semi-structured, and open), and documentary review (photographs, audiovisual recordings, and diaries). Researchers select informants through purposive sampling (selecting competent and knowledgeable key informants) and snowball sampling (proceeding from one informant to another in a chain until the data reach saturation). (Nasution, 2023, p. 96; Abdullah, 2024, p. 62)

Qualitative data analysis in Tafsir research can be conducted through established analytical models: (Baidan & Azis, 2015, pp. 81–112; Nasution, 2023, pp. 68–131; Fadli, 2021, pp. 45–47; Wiraguna et al., 2024, pp. 54–55; Yin, 2016, pp. 187–189)

- Specialized Exegetical Text Analysis (Baidan and Azis): conducted through comparative analysis of sentence structure, word selection, and word placement (fronting or postponement), integrating principles of balāghah (especially ma'ānī and bayān), naḥw-ṣarf, uṣūl al-fiqh rules ('ām-khāṣṣ, muṭlaq-muqayyad, mujmal-mubayyan), Tafsir principles (jumlah ismiyyah-fi'liyyah, ḍamīr, munāsabah), and mastery of the context of asbāb al-nuzūl (mutakallim bih, man unzila ilaih, mutakallam fīh).

- Data Reduction: summarizing and selecting core data, sorting themes, and removing irrelevant information.
- Data Display: presenting organized data in the form of narrative text, matrices, graphs, or conceptual networks.
- Conclusion Drawing / Verification: formulating tentative preliminary conclusions and then verifying them again in the field until credible conclusions are reached and new findings (novelty) emerge.
- Domain Analysis: identifying a general picture of the data based on nine universal semantic relationships (type, space, cause-and-effect, rationality, action location, function, means of achieving goals, sequence, and attributes).
- Taxonomic Analysis: elaborating a selected domain into subdomains in a detailed and exhaustive manner using a taxonomic diagram.
- Componential Analysis: contrasting specific characteristics among elements in a paradigm table to identify fundamental dimensions of difference.
- Cultural Theme Analysis: integrating relationships among domains into a unified cultural value or central theme.
- Grounded Theory Analysis: applying the constant comparative method through three stages of coding: open coding (forming conceptual categories from raw data), axial coding (linking categories with subcategories around the core phenomenon), and selective coding (formulating the storyline and theoretical propositions). (Saldaña, 2021)

When processing extensive field data and text transcripts, researchers may use CAQDAS software such as NVivo to facilitate coding, data cleaning, analytic memo writing, and visualization of relationships among categories without diminishing the researcher's capacity for rational analysis.

Conclusion

The first research question is answered by distinguishing methodology as the epistemological and paradigmatic rationale of inquiry, theory as the conceptual and interpretive lens, and method as the procedures for selecting, collecting, and analyzing evidence. The second is answered through a transparent reconstruction of five existing tafsir research orientations—thematic-contextual, empirical-response, figure study, methodological development, and comparative-interdisciplinary—from the reviewed institutional and specialist literature. Their contribution here is organizational and heuristic, not the discovery of empirically confirmed types. The third is answered by a decision sequence that connects the exegetical problem and its normative or empirical dimensions to explicit assumptions, suitable theory, research design, and auditable analytical procedures.

The principal methodological contribution is thus an integrated alignment framework intended to help researchers justify each design choice and identify mismatches before data collection or textual analysis begins. In practice, it may support proposal preparation, supervision, and evaluation by prompting researchers to state the object of inquiry, the status of their evidence, the limits of interpretation, and the reasons for selecting particular techniques. These implications remain provisional: the study is based on a purposively selected documentary corpus and an illustrative dissertation, not on a systematic review, multiple applied cases, or an outcome evaluation. Future research should apply the

framework to diverse completed tafsir studies and assess its usability, interpretive adequacy, and limits across textual and living-Qur'an research contexts.

References

Abdul Fattah Nasution, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*, 1st edition, ed. by Meyniar Albina, Bandung: CV. Harfa Creative, 2023.

Aguiar, Gustavo Jorge Martins de, "Distinguishing Between Method and Methodology in Academic Research", *Journal of Advance Research in Mathematics And Statistics (ISSN 2208-2409)*, vol. 11, no. 1, Ninety Nine Publication, 2024, pp. 20–4 [https://doi.org/10.61841/xjkxs957].

Ali Geno Berutu, "Book Review of Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif by Prof. Noeng Muhajir", *Researchgate.net*, 2017.

CHan, Man Ching Ester and David R. Clarke, *Rethinking the connection between theory and methodology: a question of mutual affordances*, https://hal.science/hal-02417376v1.

Fadli, Muhammad Rijal, "Memahami desain metode penelitian kualitatif", *HUMANIKA*, vol. 21, no. 1, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, 2021, pp. 33–54 [https://doi.org/10.21831/hum.v21i1.38075].

Faisal Abdullah, "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif dan Ragamnya", *Al-Thifl: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2024, pp. 54–66.

Fitrah Sugiarto, Ahlan, and Nurwathani Junhari, *Metodologi Penelitian Living Qur'an dan Hadis*, I edition, Mataram: UIN Mataram Press, 2023.

Nashruddin Baidan and Erwati Azis, *Metode Khusus Penelitian Tafsir*, Surakarta: Institut Agama Islam Negeri Surakarta, 2015.

Prawanti, Andina Aprilia et al., "Desain, Jenis, dan Metode Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif", *Tarbiyah : Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2025 [https://doi.org/10.64464/tarbiyah.v4i1.186].

Robert K. Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, II edition, New York: The Guildford Press, 2016.

Romdhon, Muhammad Rizqi, "Peradaban Ekologis dan Berkelanjutan Perspektif Al-Qur`an", Dissertation, Jakarta: Universitas PTIQ Jakarta, 2025.

Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif dan R&D*, Bandung: Alfabeta, 2013.

Tamaulina Br. Sembiring et al., *Buku Ajar Metodologi Penelitian (Teori dan Praktik)*, I edition, ed. by Bambang Ismaya, Karawang: Saba Jaya Publisher, 2024.

Tim Penyusun Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Pemikiran Islam UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, *Pedoman Penulisan Tesis dan Karya Ilmiah*, Yogyakarta: Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Pemikiran Islam UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2022.

Tim Penyusun Pascasarjana PTIQ, *Panduan Penyusunan Tesis dan Disertasi*, Jakarta: Program Pascasarjana Universitas PTIQ, 2017.

Wiraguna, Sidi, L.M.F. Purwanto, and Robert Rianto Widjaja, "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif di Era Transformasi Digital Qualitative Research Methods in the Era of Digital Transformation", *Arsitekta : Jurnal Arsitektur dan Kota Berkelanjutan*, vol. 6, no. 01, 2024 [https://doi.org/10.47970/arsitekta.v6i01.524].

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 16(4), 589–597. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2019.1628806

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Gadamer, H.-G. (2004). Truth and method (2nd rev. ed., J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans.). Continuum. (Original work published 1960).

Levac, D., Colquhoun, H., & O'Brien, K. K. (2010). Scoping studies: Advancing the methodology. Implementation Science, 5, Article 69. https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-5-69

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. SAGE Publications.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Rahman, F. (2009). Major themes of the Qur'an (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Ricoeur, P. (1976). Interpretation theory: Discourse and the surplus of meaning. Texas Christian University Press.

Saeed, A. (2006). Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a contemporary approach. Routledge.

Saldaña, J. (2021). The coding manual for qualitative researchers (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Sinai, N. (2017). The Qur'an: A historical-critical introduction. Edinburgh University Press.

Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. Journal of Business Research, 104, 333–339. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. Qualitative Inquiry, 16(10), 837–851. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121