2026

JOURNAL OF

TAWḤĪDIC EPISTEMOLOGY

AND

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Volume 1, Number 1, 2026

This journal is published biannually in June and December
under the publisher's address as stated below.

Published by:

IIUM PRESS,
International Islamic University Malaysia
Jalan Gombak, 53100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Phone (+603) 6421-5014, Fax: (+603) 6421-6298

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Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	ʻ
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	ʼ
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
َ	a		ًا، ًى	an
ُ	u		ٌو	un
ِ	i		ٍي	in
َا، َٰ، َى،	ā		َوْ	aw
ُو	ū		َيْ	ay
ِي	ī		ٌوّ	uww, ū (in final position)
			ٍيّ	iyy, ī (in final position)

ROTAS Transliteration Kit: http://rotas.iium.edu.my

Editorial Note

This new *Journal of Tawḥīdic Epistemology and Integration of Knowledge* (JTEIOK) is introduced as part of the International Islamic University Malaysia's (IIUMs) aspiration and resolve to regain its intellectual leadership as an Islamic University founded upon the philosophy of *tawḥīd*. While numerous other journals have already established themselves in various disciplines, most are along Kulliyyah or Institute lines. JTEIOK is unique in that it aims to be a university-based journal that presents knowledge from the *tawḥīdic epistemology* (TE) as well as showcasing the educational experiences of the IIUM. In this sense, JTEIOK aims to be the platform to share the aspirations born out of the renewed vision and mission of the IIUM, i.e. of TE and *ummatic* excellence (UE).

The IIUM, established in 1983, currently has 14 Kulliyyah and 4 Institutes offering programmers at the UG and PG levels. For this period, IIUM has primarily functioned as a quality teaching university. In these four decades, the IIUM has produced over 120 thousand graduates from over 130 countries. Our Alumni are doing us and the *ummah* proud in all fields of study as well as being leaders and agents of positive change in the highest levels of government and society. IIUM in this sense can take pride in its contribution to the *ummah* and to humanity at large. About 10 years ago, the University embarked on another dimension of higher education, i.e. community engagement. Rather than living comfortably within the safe confines of our classrooms, IIUM took the challenge to engage in the community. Numerous projects and programmes with social impact were conducted and various awards and honours were gained, showcasing IIUMs maturing journey.

However, in the contemporary setting, another central dimension of the university is calling us, and we cannot shy away from this obligation. Central to any functioning university role, including in teaching and community engagement, is the need to excel in research that produces new knowledge. New strategies are needed. The teaching function must continue to improve, especially with the advent of AI technologies. Community engagement must be enhanced to ensure that universities make a difference to the societies they live in. However, there is an urgent need to develop unique breakthroughs in knowledge development and policy prescriptions from research based on the unique philosophy of the IIUM.

The nation, the Muslim *ummah* and humanity must be served by this alternative paradigm i.e. one in which both revelation and the universe, with the utilization of all human faculties, presents more effective and meaningful solutions to the challenges facing humanity. IIUM must provide an alternative paradigm that integrates ethics and morality into scientific knowledge development and application to serve humanity. Here is where IIUM with TE base and with the aim to promote UE plays a central role. JTEIOK hopes to become the platform to harness intellectual insights from within and without the University to promote reform and renewal in a civilizational framework. A noble aspiration.

In the Holy Qur'an, the concept of 'lofty ambitions' is expressed through terms that emphasize high spiritual aspirations and the transformative "resolve" required to achieve them. The Holy Qur'an encourages believers to aim for the highest goals, both in this life and the next, while radically reshaping individual character and society. While this concept, represented by the phrase *uluww al-himmah* (lofty ambition/high aspiration) is not found directly in the Holy Qur'an its components are. *Uluww* means elevation or highness. In a spiritual sense, it implies "making sacrifices and undertaking hardships with an open heart compared to the high station sought' i.e. to reach the lofty stations of the *Ulul 'Azm* (Messengers of Firm Resolve). The Holy Qur'an praises the "Messengers of Firm Resolve" (The Holy Qur'an, 46:35), who demonstrated radical ambition through their persistent struggle to transform their societies despite overwhelming odds. Islam promotes *ihsan* (excellence/perfection) and rejects mediocrity. The command for *ihsan* (The Holy Qur'an, 16:90) is a call to strive for the highest quality in every action, treating every task as an act of worship for the Creator. Transformation in the Holy Qur'an (and the Holy Qur'anic perspective on "radical" change) is often internal first, only then having meaningful and sustainable external transformation. The verse "[v]erily never will God change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls)" (The Holy Qur'an, 13:11) is the perfect example for this transformation and societal reform.

Competing for Greatness also has a clear 'value-premise'. Instead of worldly competition, the Holy Qur'an urges a "race" toward forgiveness and a paradise "as wide as the heavens and earth" (The Holy Qur'an, 3:133). The Prophets described their radical missions as purely for *islāh* (reform to the best of their ability) aiming to fix systemic corruption without seeking worldly gain. There are verses emphasizing examples of 'lofty ambitions' through the prayers of the Prophets, "[o]ur Lord!... give us (the grace) to lead the righteous" (The Holy Qur'an, 25:74). This is an ambition not just to be good, but to lead those who are already good. Also, one has Prophetic

teachings that encourage asking for *Jannat al-Firdaus*, the highest level of Paradise, rather than settling for the minimum.

The IIUM has embarked on a journey to strive for this lofty ambition and does so with the resolve required. As an International and Islamic University, we must ensure that the *amānah* entrusted to us is fulfilled. JTEIOK is an effort to enhance and inculcate a research mindset and to encourage all staff of the IIUM to share their knowledge and experience on this journey.

For this inaugural issue of JTEIOK, 7 articles are presented. Osman Bakar sets the tone for this issue by arguing for natural intelligence (NI) to be guided by TE in facing new challenges prompted by artificial intelligence (AI). Such challenges are mainly from the problematic interface between these two forms of intelligence that eventually leads to their clash. These are discussed through the ideological and social dimensions, followed by how AI and Islamic philosophy particularly al-Farabi's notion of prophetic intelligence can clearly be contrasted and thus solving such problems and confusions. Next, Abdul Rashid Moten continues by elaborating on the concept of TE as espounded by Osman Bakar. While still relatively 'new' in academic discourse, the ideas underlying TE are very much shared with the Integration/Islamisation of Knowledge (IOK) discourse over the last 50 years or so. The idea of *tawḥīd* or "unity" is not meant to be confined to just theological studies, but in the case of knowledge and sciences, it is meant to be the unifying principle of all branches of knowledge. There is also a brief comparison of the thoughts of three pioneering scholars on IOK namely Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, Naquib al-Attas and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. The paper by Mohamed Fouz Mohamed Zacky, Arafath Careem and Mohamed Ashath Mohamed Shafeen extend the argument for IOK to Muslim minority countries, giving the example of Sri Lanka and of the Naleemiah Institute of Islamic Studies (NIIS) that wants to promote integrated curriculum to produce contemporary professionals who are also well-versed in *turath al-Islami*. The overview of Islamic education reform in Sri Lanka since the 1960s provides an important background to understanding the evolution of IOK reforms there as well as the internal and external IOK intellectual influencers in Sri Lanka. In particular, the impact of IIUM on the curriculum development of the NIIS is worthy of further analysis on how challenges to genuine IOK efforts can be overcome.

Sadheer Khan Tofique Ur Rahman and Ahmad El-Muhammady Muhammad Uthman El-Muhammady then discuss TE and IOK reforms in Pakistani madrasahs with the cases of two madrasahs namely the Jamia-tur-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran. By adopting a problem-based

learning approach, the IIUM IOK reforms are attempted in what is still a very dualistic education system, where educational dualism exists between national/modern schools and traditional madrasahs. Locating Islamic educational reform in Pakistan with Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, Naquib al-Attas and particularly Fazlur Rahman, the authors argue that resistance to change, from both modern and traditional education systems required a tool to enable reform to pedagogy, something that Project-Based Learning (PBL) provided.

This issue then has surveys in the form of two bibliometric review articles. The first, an article by Mohamed Asmy Mohd Thas Thaker, surveys and reviews literature found in Scopus database on the sharing economy from Islamic perspectives that identifies trends and emerging issues. While literature in this area is still only about 10–15 years old, interest is growing. This study paves the way for a future research agenda in which the features of Islamic perspectives can be further analysed and operationalised. It is also a pivotal initial step towards developing robust frameworks that integrate the sharing economy with Islamic principles. The second survey by Bendebka Ramzi and Syaza Farhana Mohamad Shukri looks at the area of international relations (IR) and Muslim nations utilising the Web of Science database from 2000−2023. As with the IOK agenda, the authors argue that modern IR theory may not be suitable to understand the Muslim world. Hence their call for developing an Islamic theory of IR, one in which both modern IR works as well as our civilizational scholarship together with revelation are utilised.

Finally, in the "Reflection" section, Mohamed Aslam Mohamed Haneef presents the historical establishment of the IIUM and how TE (without the use of that phrase) and the IOK agenda have been at the base of the Islamic philosophy of education that the IIUM adheres to. Locating the establishment of the IIUM as part of the educational/intellectual reform agenda as part of the wider Qur'anic agenda of civilizational reform and renewal (*islāh* and *tajdīd*), he argues that reputational integrity of the IIUM cannot happen without reference to the underlying philosophical basis of TE and its manifestation in all academic endeavors. This requirement is the *raison d'tre* for the establishment of the IIUM. The establishment of the JTEIOK is meant to provide scholars, both within and without the IIUM, an opportunity to present their ideas and thoughts on both theoretical/conceptual as well as its operational/applied dimensions.

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Mohamed Aslam Mohamed Haneef
Editor-in-Chief
Journal of Tawḥīdic Epistemology and Integration of Knowledge

Editor's Perspective

This journal, namely the Journal of *Tawḥīdic* Epistemology and Integration of Knowledge (JTEIOK) is the flagship journal of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) for the enrichment of *tawḥīdic* focused and knowledge integration discourse. Published by the IIUM Press, the journal is intended to be published twice a year, bimestrial by the middle and the end of every year.

Notwithstanding research articles, the journal also serves as a platform to promote academic debates on any topic within the journal's scope. For instance, an author may criticize and rebuttal the thesis or proposition made by another author's article published in the journal's previous volume. This will not only expand the discourse, but also will enliven it and make it academically, if not better, at par with other ideological frameworks available in the academic circle today. Hence, we invite not only Muslim scholars, but also non-Muslim scholars to contribute to the journal. In addition, in the subsequent volumes, we invite reflections, book reviews, conference reports and review articles as we believe these articles also have their respective importance.

We adopt the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition referencing style with a minimal number of endnotes as it allows scholars across different fields to be comfortable to contribute to the journal. This is because, perhaps, those scientists in natural sciences are more familiar with the APA format, while those philosophers are keener towards the Chicago referencing style i.e. footnotes, without ignoring the usefulness of the former format. It is hoped that this will encourage more integration and transdisciplinary approaches from scholars of different expertise.

As much as we can we will also try our best not to request any publication fee such as the Article Processing Charge (APC). The articles are also available online (open access) and can be downloaded for free.

When we talk about *tawḥīdic* epistemology (TE) in comparison to Islamisation of Knowledge (IOK), it is not an alien or a new concept to the former. What is more, the latter is the pivotal concept that anchors all the other concepts within the former. To be exact, all these concepts cling to TE for their notional establishment, balance and solidity purposes (IIUM Policies and Guidelines on Islamisation, 2013, p. 17). TE is the backbone of IOK, so to speak, if we skeletonize the whole IOK theoretical structure.

Having the right epistemology, which is TE, is crucial for Muslim scholars as without it, the subsequent thinking and acting will not be in the correct path as approved by Allah i.e. not Islamic (see Bakar, 2008, p. 2; Malkawi, 2015, pp. 5-6; Ramadan, 2009, p. 301). This is acknowledged by non-Muslim philosophers and thinkers too, albeit not having Islam as the guiding framework, by stressing on the importance of having the correct epistemology (Habermas, 1972, pp. 67–69) or "epistemic virtue" (Baggini, 2023, pp. 4–5) prior to formulating any theoretical concept. This is because many philosophers or thinkers managed to establish school of thoughts, yet they are standing on cunning and persuasive arguments coupled with negative moral principles. These lead to many of today's societal problems and predicaments.

For example, a non-Islamic thinker (hence, not employing *tawḥīdic* epistemology in thinking process) may argue that in a democratic society, we should approve pedophiles as part and parcel of the country's civic-minded citizens, as gender is a fluid concept, therefore, there is no limit for a person's sexual preference and no one should say no to any of it, unless if you want to be labelled as un-democratic. The same goes for the categorization of the so-called "human animals" and "nonhuman animals", and the egalitarian relation that they have with one another. Each party should not "harm" the opposite party as we are all equals. Not to mention that capitalism as the "best" political economy system that rewards those who are "hardworking" and punish those who are "idle" (Laslett, 1967, p. 43).

These abovementioned examples are acceptable to certain extent, for example power could shape gender bias, oppress animals and capitalism rewards those who are "go-getters". However, to provide a thinking framework that give parameters to our arguments, they must be based on *tawḥīdic* epistemology that will never lead us astray i.e. transgressing the Islamic framework while outlining our theoretical framework and paradigm. For example, a thinker with a *tawḥīdic* mind will define gender as a fixed concept as outlined in the Islamic tenets; "harm" as oppositely different particularly when it comes to the sacrifice of, for instance, cows during *Īd al-Aḍḥā*; and capitalism begets "periodic economic and financial crisis" (Bakar, 2010, p. 426) that lead to exploitations and oppressions of those without enough capital, no matter they are indolent or not.

In conclusion, as mentioned, it is hoped that the journal will become the "breeding ground" for vibrant academic discourses on the topic. Great scholars say that a school of thought is not

established by claiming that such a thinking school has been built, but it is through constant development and solidification of related concepts that enable one to be formalized.

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Tawḥīdic Epistemology and Cognitive Science: Harmonising Artificial Intelligence with Natural Intelligence

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Abstract

This article discusses several key facets of the contemporary artificial intelligence (AI) agenda that is primarily shaped by the technologically advanced countries of the world. It describes the AI agenda as having both ideological and social dimensions. The ideological dimension pertains to the pursuit of theoretical scientific advancement in intelligence-related studies such as in neuroscience and cognitive science with the view of unravelling the mysteries of human intelligence. As for its social dimension it pertains to applied AI that seeks to transform both the human individual and his physical and social environment, the former into a new humanity through technological enhancement of the human body and the latter into a technocratic cultural space. With respect to this quest, this article provides a critical discussion of the transhumanism movement in America. The most important facet of AI agenda is perhaps the issue of the interface of natural intelligence (NI) and AI generated by rapid developments in the two dimensions in question. This article argues for the harmonisation of NI and AI in the light of the traditional Islamic discourse on NI, especially on prophetic intelligence. It seeks to remind human beings that, as a product of the human mind, AI could never equal the total intelligence of its creator, let alone to surpass it. Further, this article seeks to emphasise that it is the *tawḥīdic* epistemology (TE) inspired cognitive science that makes possible the harmonisation of NI and AI.

Keywords: *Tawḥīdic* epistemology, artificial intelligence, natural intelligence, prophetic intelligence, cognitive science

Introduction

This essay deals with some of the major issues that have arisen in contemporary human thoughts following the fast-expanding and problematic interface of natural and artificial intelligences that we have been witnessing during the last several decades. Not only is the interface rapidly expanding, but it is also getting more complex and epistemologically muddier. Moreover, it is sending more signals that it is now venturing into danger zones for human security. The very nature and characteristics of the interface could only mean that more major issues will emerge to haunt the contemporary human mind. We observe that the interface has become more controversial in recent years.

In this essay, I seek to discuss the interface of natural and artificial intelligences in the light of the organic conceptual link between TE and cognitive science. By NI is meant that part of the human person comprising all his cognitive organs, physical and non-physical, together with their respective functions and activities in information gathering and organisation for the purpose of knowledge-processing and acquisition and understanding the mysteries of human language. In Islamic civilisation, NI thus understood is signified by the term *'aql*, which is usually translated as intellect or reason.[i] Interestingly, the same term is used in Islamic philosophy and cosmology to refer to angelic intelligence apparently for the reason that human and angelic intelligences are regarded as of being of the same nature; namely, a form of incorporeal light that is described in theological language as "spiritual". It is perfectly legitimate to refer to angelic and other forms of intelligence that God has created as NI, but this essay is solely interested in human NI. And by AI is meant humanly created intelligence that seeks to simulate human intelligence in machines by programming them to think like humans and mimic their actions. In short, AI is the name of a programme to create human-like intelligence to the greatest degree of complexity and sophistication possible.

The interface of NI and AI we are now discussing was essentially generated by the encounter of two important developments in postmodern science and technology. One key development was scientific advances in neuroscience and related disciplines in human biology, particularly in relations to cerebral intelligence, which were enhanced by new biomedical engineering and biotechnological tools. Cerebral intelligence studies have rapidly advanced as a result. The other key development, which is perhaps more important than the first in terms of impact on human beings and their society, is contemporary man's desire to create AI in the image of his own NI. His attempt to exteriorise this desire in societal space, which is essentially driven by

materialism in various forms, has already produced visible fruits that invite mixed reactions from individuals and groups and even governments. The first early images of human intelligence on the material plane, albeit only partial and not total, have appeared in the forms of several AI technological objects. The present prediction is that it would be only a matter of time before bolder and more sophisticated images of human intelligence will appear in the contemporary material civilisation. What the consequences of such a development would be, we can only speculate and conjecture at this point of time.

The AI Agenda: The Ideological Dimension

The AI agenda, which is presently pursued with vigour especially in the wealthier and more scientifically and technologically advanced countries in both East and West, is an outcome of the two key developments I have just mentioned. In a sense, although related, the two developments may be viewed as different from each other in terms of orientation and goal. The main interest in the first line of development is theoretical, meaning the pursuit of scientific research of the human brain with the expressed purpose of deepening man's understanding of his own intelligence. The assumption here is that the brain is the true seat of human intelligence and knowledge and the source of his cognitive powers.[ii] The orientation and goal of brain research is towards the progressive enhancement and empowerment of human natural intelligence. Interest in AI, however, is not excluded from this research enterprise, but it is subordinated to the theoretical goal of revealing the mysteries of human intelligence, which is viewed as the essential attribute of human nature or the core of humanness.

The orientation and goal in the other line of development is quite different. It is practical or more precisely technological. It is to create AI in the image of NI in the analogous way that the Abrahamic religious traditions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – speak of "man as being created in the image of God". In the latter case, the image is understood to be total. As such, the image of NI needs to be total in nature as well. Theoretically, this would mean the creation of AI that would be a replica of NI and that would be as good as it. But the most ambitious of the contemporary technological minds are not content with this envisaged achievement. They harbour the dream of creating AI that would be superior to NI. The idea of the possibility of a future AI being superior to NI is being entertained by them and other prime shapers of the second line of development, because they strongly believe that human evolution will make it inevitable. In fact, as we shall later see, there are organised voices within the ranks of these prime shapers of AI, who are optimistic about the coming of such a technological future.

However, notwithstanding the difference in orientation, goal, and concentration between the two lines of scientific-technological developments, there are common philosophical ideas and issues about intelligence that bind them together, thus meriting their epistemological merger into one greater cultural movement. The common philosophical ideas underlying the concepts of both NI and AI that have been defined are found rooted in the theories of human nature. Both religion and science have a deep interest in human nature, but they differ in their perspectives of understanding this very important subject. Not only are they different in their formulation of fundamental questions about human nature – such as its origin, purpose, development, implications for human behaviour, and significance for the Earth's planetary ecology – but also in the answers they provide to these questions. These differences explain the multiple and contending theories of human nature that have been borne out of the wombs of religion and science.

But differences aside between the religious and the scientific perspectives in respect of meaning and significance which they confer on human nature, there is convergence in their appreciation of the distinctiveness and centrality of intelligence in human nature. More fundamental still is convergence in their characterisation of self-consciousness and self-discovery as important psychological features that are integral to human nature. Such a view that posits intelligence, self-consciousness, and self-discovery as core features of human nature is especially characteristic of the religion of Islam. Moreover, Islam's theological perspective on human nature has been consistent in maintaining the idea of the complementary role of science as a source of knowledge to help empower that very perspective. Epistemologically, human nature is perhaps the most fertile ground for a productive encounter between religion and science in the history of Islamic thought. Of particular importance, human intelligence has served as an illustrative case of this broad encounter, especially during the most creative phase of Islamic civilisation when the subject was extensively discussed and explored, albeit largely theoretical in nature. Now, in the light of the extraordinary interest in intelligence studies, both natural and artificial, and theoretical and applied, it might be a welcome idea for Muslims to particularly revisit past discourses in their civilisation to gain new insights on the subject.

The classical Islamic discourse on human intelligence may serve as an objective and independent critic of the contemporary AI agenda, its ensuing controversial debates, and the various projections into the technocratic future of AI. Roberto Paura[iii] has described some of these future projections as over-optimistic, wish-fulfilment fantasy, and utopian. He is referring

in particular to the technocratic utopia of transhumanism, a contemporary cultural and philosophical movement, whose ideology is centred on the idea of the feasibility of a technological enhancement of the human body and thus the emergence of a new type of humanity.[iv] Transhumanism was born in the United States during the 1980s "as a product of the technological revolution represented by the mass distribution of information technology and cybernetics, as well as by the first scientific studies on nanotechnologies" (Paura, 2016, p. 23). Transhumanists believe in the future appearance of a post-human species "whose members can theoretically live forever thanks to breakthrough findings in medicine, biotechnology, nanotechnology, computer science and artificial intelligence" (Paura, 2016, p. 25). The goal of transhumanism is nothing less than a total fusion between humans and artificial intelligences. It is "to get rid of hardware by transferring the whole content of our brains inside of supercomputers, so to preserve the software, i.e., our consciousness, untouched" (Paura, 2016, p. 25). Arguing from the Islamic perspective, Mahmoud Dhaouadi, a professor of Sociology at the University of Tunisia, upon reviewing the ongoing controversy over AI and NI (Dhaouadi, 2006, pp. 158–173), concludes that the two can never be equal, let alone AI surpassing NI in quality and performance. The main message from the Qur'an, says Dhaouadi, is that "AI can never be equal to NI, for God has not imparted to it His divine breath" (Dhaouadi, 2006, p. 173).

From the theological point of view, AI will always be inferior to human NI, simply because it is man's creation. It is against logic and natural law for a creature to be equal to its creator. But man's desire to create things in his image will always be part of his consciousness, because God has implanted that desire in his nature to permanently remind him of the truth that he has been created in His image. Man's desire to know everything about his intelligence and to create its replica in physical form is none other than the expression of his self-discovery as an intelligent being who is an image of divine intelligence and as *homo faber* (man the maker) who is an image of God the Maker. In the light of this theological perspective, it may be argued that man's pursuit of AI has a metaphysical justification and should, therefore, be fully supported. But a counterargument from theology is that perfect human imitation of divine intelligence is to be pursued on the spiritual plane. On the physical plane man's creation of AI cannot have limitless possibilities, constrained as it were by the laws of biophysics.

The AI Agenda: Its Social Dimensions, Real and Imagined

There is no doubt that the desire of contemporary man to create AI to various degrees of sophistication is an important issue for our time. Turning this desire into physical and social reality can have many implications, both positive and negative, for the present and future humanity. There are many questions that can be asked about this human desire such as: What is its nature? Why it has surfaced at a particular moment in human history, namely in post-modern times? What is it that motivates and sustains it? And what explains its technological progress? The scope of this essay does not allow us to address these questions. However, we have at least touched on the appearance of transhumanism and its historical and technological background, which gives us some insights into the current thinking on the future social space that is expected to be dictated by the progress of AI.

The ongoing interface between AI and NI has thus far aroused mixed responses and assumed a new significance for the world community on which it seems worth reflecting, not least out of our concern for the future of NI itself that has been traditionally accepted as an essential defining element of humanness and humanity. The general concern in the minds of many people, especially those following the discourse, is about the serious implications of the interface for the global socio-economic order. The gulf in economic wealth between the rich and the poor nations keeps progressively widening, which could only threaten the wellbeing of the global community. It is to be noted that the current agenda of AI, which is dominated by rich countries that are also the most advanced in science and technology, is motivated by several considerations, including scientific-technological, economic, and political-military. Consequently, this agenda has generated activities of multiple kinds in different sectors of societal life.

First, there is the purely scientific-technological motive directed at the pursuit of AI that would serve as tools of scientific research on NI itself and on extra-terrestrial intelligences. Second, there is the economic motive, which is mainly interested in the large-scale production of robotic and other forms of AI for commercialisation purposes to serve sectarian economic interests. How we wish that the economic motive is closely tied up to a social motive in the name of the pursuit of AI for the sake of a common social good! But such a joint motive is apparently missing from the agenda of AI. That would leave the impression that the economic interest in AI is mainly dictated by profit-making at the expense of social security as humans in the job market are forced to give way to robots. And third, there is the political-military motive that is

aimed at the creation of the most sophisticated AI-supported weaponry of the day in the name of national security and military superiority such as that which is pursued by the United States.

These various motives have resulted in rapid growths of demands for AI. The expanding scientific and technological applications of AI are increasingly shaping the public view of what is and what is not important for humans to know about NI. In short, contemporary man's appreciation of his own NI is beginning to be clouded if not also devalued by his increasing admiration for AI.

The Clash between AI and NI

In theory, it is rather strange that we could be entertaining the idea of a clash between AI and NI when, in fact, the source of the former is none other than the latter. But the point is that the clash has become a reality as may be inferred from various contending positions in contemporary discourse on the interface between the two forms of intelligence. There are several explanations for this clash. For the sake of brevity, I am offering here only one explanation, which I think, however, is the most important. It pertains to the clash of understandings about the respective natures and powers of NI and AI. There would be no clash possible, if we always bear in mind that AI owed NI its origin and existence and whatever powers it has received from its human creator. But a clash would occur if AI were to be valued beyond its real worth, while underestimating the worth of NI. I argue that such a condition already exists in our time, and hence the clash!

To avoid clashes, it is important for us to be intellectually honest about the fundamental differences between AI and NI that many insist are irreconcilable, and to refrain from making excessive claims on the potential powers of AI. Intellectual honesty demands from us sound knowledge of the true nature, characteristics, and powers, and developmental possibilities of NI. There is such a thing as the collective treasury of human knowledge about NI drawn from both religious traditions and modern science. Islam would insist on adding Qur'anic ideas on NI to the treasury. It is in the light of the total treasury of knowledge about NI that the contemporary world should pursue the AI agenda so that destructive conflicts between the two forms of intelligence could be avoided.

It is also important to take note that the contents and dimensions of NI are perceived or understood differently by different groups of scientists, philosophers, and theologians even if they live and think within the same civilisation. Quite often, we don't mean the same thing

when we used the word NI. Thus, when we say that there is a clash between AI and NI, to which conception of NI are we referring? From the Islamic perspective, it may be argued that the human NI that is currently serving as the model for AI is not what is portrayed in its fullness in Islamic and many other religious traditions as well as by many modern psychologists and cognitive scientists, but rather what is believed and understood by proponents of AI who have reduced NI to cerebral intelligence. The objective model of NI to be emulated in Islam is the prophetic intelligence, which is generally regarded as the most perfect intelligence that is possible for man. This prophetic intelligence that embraces cerebral, intuitive, and cardiac intelligences in their most excellent forms may be presented as the best argument against the claim that it is possible to create an intelligent bio-machine that would be superior to human intelligence. After all, the Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him) is believed in Islam not only as the best human but also as the best of all creatures!

Until modern times, wisdom or the Qur'anic *hikmah* has been universally extolled as the most excellent form of human knowledge and intelligence. The issue of the future of wisdom in the economy of human intelligence is seen as inextricably tied up to the future of civilisation itself and which, therefore, must be of duly concern to our present and future humanity. In the light of the AI agenda, the future of wisdom is at stake for two main reasons. First, there is growing acceptance of cerebral intelligence as man's highest achievement. This belief would lead to the impoverishment of wisdom, since cerebral intelligence is not its source. Rather, wisdom is identified with intelligence of the heart and of the intellect and with intuition. In short, wisdom will flourish only if higher forms of intelligence are given ample spaces to grow and develop. Second, the popularisation of AI that is pursued at the expense of NI, especially as understood in religion, will further erode man's appreciation of the higher forms of NI that by nature cannot be reduced to the simplest form of logical reasoning, be it human or bio-machine.

Consequently, it is imperative for humanity to pursue an AI agenda that would not be in destructive conflict with NI. Furthermore, the contemporary man needs to be reminded of the intelligence that defines his humanness and the role of the prophetic intelligence as the model to be emulated. These two imperatives are now discussed further in the following sections while their implications for the contemporary human civilisation are being pointed out.

Islamic Philosophy, Prophetic Intelligence, and the AI Agenda

Let me now rephrase the first imperative stated above in the form of a fully loaded question: how can we pursue an AI agenda that to all intents and purposes would serve humanity by delivering societal and civilisational goods and countering social ills in innovative ways that would at least minimise destructive consequences on the present humanity and its civilisation if not altogether eliminate them? And let me also rephrase the second imperative in the form of a no less loaded question: how can we persuade and impress upon the present humanity to listen to and appreciate the precious message embodied in the traditional idea of prophetic intelligence and draw the necessary conclusions from it? This part of the essay now attempts to put forward several big ideas that may help us formulate some key answers to the two questions.

For Muslims, the two stated imperatives, which in our opinion are civilisational in scale, are integral to the Qur'an's social philosophy. In Qur'anic terms, "delivering societal and civilisational goods" would be acts of honouring the social principle of *amr bi'l-ma'ruf* while "countering social ills" is to honour the principle of *nahy 'an al-munkar*. (see The Holy Qur'an, 3:104)[v] Furthermore, the idea of technology as a tool of human progress as opposed to the idea of man as a servant of technology or the idea of technology as an end in itself – a simple but precious message from traditional civilisations that has fast disappeared from the screen of modern consciousness – is a very important integral element of the Qur'an's social philosophy. The issue of ethics of technology, a novel example of which is what we have just raised in relation to the possible and indeed already visible misuses of AI, may easily be seen in Islam as part of a much broader epistemological concern, namely the ethics of knowledge. Islamic ethics of knowledge is best summed up in this well-known prophetic instruction: "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave" and "seek knowledge even as far as China." But only "seek knowledge that is beneficial" and at the same time "seek God's protection from knowledge that is unbeneficial."

Beneficial knowledge is traditionally understood in Islam as any knowledge that would contribute to the affirmation of two fundamental revealed truths. These truths are: first, the principle of Divine Unity (*al- tawḥīd*); and second, the principle of Divine Law (*al-Shariah*) (see The Holy Qur'an, 5:48)[vi] understood as the foundation of a just and balanced socio-political, or better still civilisational order. The latter principle may also be understood as the principle of Divine Justice since the essence of the Divine ″ is justice for both the human and

natural orders. The domain of such knowledge is indeed vast and in fact unlimited since both unity and justice are in the natures of things. And the opposite of beneficial knowledge, that is, the unbeneficial or useless kind, is any idea or knowledge claim that negates or undermines these twin truths or that is indifferent to their epistemological demands. From the perspective of the two truths, such kind of knowledge is far *limited* in scope, and yet some humans prefer to indulge in it.

It is in the light of this understanding of the concept of useful and useless knowledge that contemporary Muslim discourse on the AI agenda should be conducted. And it is with such an awareness that we need to ask ourselves this very fundamental question: is the AI agenda going to enhance our appreciation of cosmic unity of which human unity is an integral part and, more importantly, our appreciation of the divine unity of which this cosmic unity is a reflection? (see The Holy Qur'an, 21:22)[vii] Or will it destroy the unity of the human order because of the havoc it wreaks on the human microcosm through uncontrolled technological innovations and hence destroy the idea of cosmic unity itself? Consequently, with the unity of the human and cosmic orders shattered, does the AI agenda not render incomprehensible or meaningless the pursuit of knowledge of divine unity? From the Islamic perspective, all these questions pertaining to the benefits and harm, and merits and demerits of AI are issues with profound implications. We could only ignore them at the peril of the *ummah*.

The Concept of Prophetic Intelligence

The most fundamental of the big ideas we have in mind in this discussion is the idea of prophetic intelligence, the very concept of intelligence that is needed to remind us that it is the prototype of our humanity and our own ideal in life. By prophetic intelligence Muslim philosophers who were deeply immersed in its study understand it to mean human intelligence in its most perfect form, which they made efforts to explain. In other words, it is the most developed form of intelligence that can possibly be attained by the human mind. The Muslim philosopher al-Farabi (870 CE – 950 CE) identifies this super intelligence with the class of persons traditionally known as prophets. In Islam, the technical term for prophet is *nabiy*, which is known to have a precise and generally accepted meaning unlike the word 'prophet' in the English language, which is known to have a rather loose meaning in its general usage.

The essential meaning of prophet as understood in the Qur'an refers to someone who is a recipient of divine revelation (*wahy*) through the intermediary role of Archangel Gabriel. It

seems clear that the Prophet Muhammad (salutation and peace be upon him) understood the word prophet in this precise sense when he mentioned that God sent 124,000 prophets to mankind beginning with Adam (peace be upon him) and ending with himself. Numerically, this special group of people constitutes a minute fraction of mankind and yet in influence and impact they are the real shapers of human history. They were able to accomplish their earthly feats thanks largely to their super intelligence. It is thus not without good reason that some Muslim philosophers chose to devote their intellectual efforts to the study of prophetic intelligence.

The definition of prophet (*nabiy*) as recipient of divine revelation raises the issue of the interrelationship between the well-known triad, namely Allāh, Gabriel, and the Prophet Muhammad. At the popular level the interrelationship between the three entities is only understood in general terms or accepted as a matter of faith. But at a more philosophical or intellectual level the issue of the interrelationship in question requires an understanding of why the three entities are to be viewed as the most fundamental triad underlying the Islamic belief system. The requirement for such an understanding becomes obvious when we realise that the first four out of six Islamic articles of faith are incorporated into the meanings of the triad. Islamic philosophy pursues the understanding by delving deeper into the meaning of revelation and prophethood beyond the popular understanding of the doctrines. One of the main aspects of this deeper meaning pertains to the nature and characteristics of prophetic intelligence that we argue will help define the limits of AI and thereby restore epistemological order into its contemporary discussion that is increasingly viewed by philosophers of ideas as in a state of utter conceptual confusion.

In our view, this confusion has largely arisen from an uncritical acceptance of ideas and concepts pertaining to intelligence and more specifically of the human type that are floating around in abundance these days. One noteworthy source of such confusion is *transhumanism*, the contemporary American socio-philosophical movement advocating human transformations through intelligence engineering, which I have earlier discussed. This uncritical acceptance of ideas surrounding AI speaks much about the state of ignorance of many people in the contemporary world about man's past knowledge of his own natural NI as accumulated and preserved in various philosophical traditions of the world. It is mainly in response to the state of confusion surrounding the issue of the comparative worth of NI and AI that the idea of prophetic intelligence is sought to be discussed in this essay. We further argue that the idea of

prophetic intelligence ought to serve as our definitive source of an all-embracing theory of human and artificial intelligences in which the real potential and the veritable role of each is clearly discerned and spelt out. In this way the legitimate role of AI may be defined and promoted without doing injustice to NI, which logic itself tells us is a necessary condition for the sound development of AI.

It is to the Islamic philosophical tradition that we turn for inspiration and help in articulating a solid and coherent theory of prophetic intelligence. The main reason for our choice is simple. It may be cogently argued that Islamic philosophy provides the best rational approach to an exposition of prophetic intelligence for the very purpose of this essay. The rational approach in question is viewed as universal and scientific, the meaning of which is now explained. To begin with, it is pertinent to emphasise that such an approach is none other than that of the Qur'an itself. To underline its universal approach, the Qur'an refers to the long line of prophets in human spiritual history, who were sent to all branches of the human family (The Holy Qur'an, 13:7) to spread the same message of divine unity (The Holy Qur'an, 21:25). These scriptural data pertaining to the divine appointment of prophets from all communities or nations allow us to speak of the Qur'an as championing the universal idea of prophetic institution that is grounded on the common message of divine unity and justice of the divine law. Rather central to this spiritual institution is the universal teaching of prophetic intelligence in which light we may hope to better understand the limits of both human natural intelligence and AI. Islamic philosophy takes the same revealed data as source of their inspiration to formulate a universal theory of prophetic intelligence. The first such theory to be presented in detail was formulated by al-Farabi.[viii]

Islamic philosophy's exposition of prophetic intelligence is not only universal but also scientific. Since the word scientific is understood and used in several senses a clarification of its usage is called for. In current popular usage the word is understood in the limited sense of empirical study of the world of nature that is based on physical observation and experimentation. Thus, the validity or legitimacy of the term is dictated by the field and method of study. In the academia, however, a wider meaning is granted to the term to include the social sciences and to a small extent the humanities. But while in this case the field for scientific investigation has been widened the same empirical method of study is in use. Worth comparing, it is in the Islamic intellectual tradition that the notion of scientific enjoys its broadest usage that cuts across diverse objects and methods of study. Here in this tradition, it is possible to

speak with unambiguity and coherence of a science of divine reality and a science of angels in the same way it is possible to speak of sciences of minerals, plants, animals, and human beings. In the same breath, along with empirical methods, Islamic epistemology speaks of the non-empirical ones, including mathematical, linguistic, metaphysical, and symbolical methods and scriptural exegesis. Islamic philosophy views all these different methods as scientific (*'ilmiyah*) in nature.

In pursuing a scientific approach to the study of prophetic intelligence Islamic philosophy seeks to faithfully emulate the Qur'an's scientific spirit as expressed in the concept of *burhan*, which carries the meaning of clear and convincing proof. The noun *burhan* occurs eight times in the Qur'an where it is used to denote convincing proofs that either come from God (e.g. The Holy Qur'an, 4:174) or are to be furnished by deniers of the truth in support of their counterclaims (e.g. The Holy Qur'an, 2:111). Al-Farabi (870 CE – 950 CE), Ibn Sina (980 CE – 1037 CE), Ibn Rushd (1126 CE – 1198 CE), Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi (1236 CE – 1311 CE) and other members of the Peripatetic school of Islamic philosophy adopted the term *al-burhan* to denote their idea of scientific method, which they argued is the best of all logical methods when it comes to the task of delivering to the human mind knowledge that is characterised as certain (*'ilm al-yaqin*). They understood *burhan* to mean a demonstrative proof. According to al-Farabi, demonstrative proof is the most certain kind of proofs since assent to its premises is of the degree of certainty, the highest possible. The certain and excellent nature of *burhan* is derived from the certain nature of its premises (Bakar, 1998, p. 85). Al-Farabi views revealed data and sense-data as reliable premises for demonstrative proofs. Thus, significantly, Islamic philosophy accepts an integrated and unified theological and empirical approach to the study of prophetic intelligence, which confers it with some kind of independent authority to critically examine and judge the epistemological claims of AI.

Another related term in the Qur'an is *bi'l-haqq*, which conveys its scientific spirit when addressing ontological and cosmological issues relating to the different orders of reality. The term *bi'l-haqq* means in truth or with the truth. This term occurs many times in the Qur'an. Its basic meaning is "in conformity with the truth," which is traditionally understood as referring to knowledge at various levels. At its highest metaphysical level, the truth refers to the knowledge of Divine Unity, while the lowest level of the truth is identified with knowledge of biophysical reality the essence of which is knowledge of the four principles of causality. Muslim philosopher-scientists hold in high esteem this knowledge of the principles of causality

– the material, formal, efficient, and final causes – which they view as scientific. The concept of final cause is especially significant for our present discussion on science since it affirms the relevance of the idea of purpose to the study of nature. In fact, one of the meanings of *bi'l-haqq* is the idea of purpose of everything that exists in the cosmos. As applied to the study of intelligence, its purposive dimension needs to be given due treatment as exemplified by Islamic philosophy.

Engaging AI with the Help of Prophetic Intelligence

According to a prophetic hadith, the first thing created by God was intelligence (*'aql*). This is the universal intelligence (*al- 'aql al-kulliy*) that is metaphysical and luminous in nature and that is yet to be reflected in the mirror of cosmic existence at various levels of its hierarchic reality and in multiple forms. The complete Islamic cosmos as shaped by the Qur'an and the prophetic hadiths stretches downwards from this heavenly universal intelligence to the lowest earthly intelligence through the angelic intelligences. It displays an orderly, beautiful, and majestic hierarchy of intelligences in which the place and role of human intelligence is rather unique. There is thus the cosmic ocean of intelligence in which our human intelligence is placed and functions and of which we should always be conscious when talking about its powers and potentials. Human intelligence alone possesses characteristics that are partly heavenly and partly earthly. Its powers appear limitless, but man's uncontrolled earthly desires and ambitions have also made real the corruption of his intelligence.

As the first and the most perfect creature that preceded and originated all other intelligent creatures, the universal intelligence may be viewed as the immediate principle of the cosmos. Since based on the Qur'an and hadiths the Prophet is regarded as not just the best human but also as the best creature (*khayr al-khalq*) and hence more specifically as the most perfect and the most excellent of all creaturely intelligences, human and non-human, some philosophers and Sufis have identified the intellect of the Prophet with this universal intelligence. Accordingly, the universal intelligence became known within the Islamic universe as the Muhammadan Intellect. The implication of this Muslim philosophical teaching for the contemporary AI discourse is obvious. From the perspective of the Muhammadan prophetic intelligence, which defines the limits of creaturely intelligence, all attempts to create an intelligence that would be superior to the human intelligence as such will be doomed to failure from the start. This is because the best of human creation will still fall within the creaturely realm. As such, it could not surpass the perfection of the Muhammadan prophetic intelligence.

Dreamers of an AI utopia may be deeply disappointed to hear such a conclusion and may decide to ignore it. But the idea of prophetic intelligence is there in the Islamic tradition to remind ourselves of the numerous possibilities of intellectual development and advancement and mind transformations that are open to our natural intelligence. We do not deny the possibility of man creating intelligent machines that could outperform man in doing certain types of works. That possibility should be explored in the name of technology at the service of man. But we argue that the issue of such a possibility is altogether of a different kind from the issue of intelligence transformation as conceived by the transhumanists that, in our view, threatens the traditional idea of humanness and thus the very existence of the human species itself.

More generally, the AI agenda of exploring "the machine in man" with all its technological possibilities may be viewed as still falling within the ethically permissible realm. However, in undertaking this exploration there is something that can be learned from Islamic philosophy, particularly al-Farabi's comprehensive theory of intelligence. The theory, we argue, does justice to both natural intelligence and AI. It explains the various stages of intelligence transformation from childhood to adulthood culminating in the attainment of what al-Farabi calls the acquired intellect (*al- 'aql al-mustafad*),[ix] which is the most developed form of the human intellect. In principle, this possibility is open to every human being, which makes the quest for it democratic. This superior intellect has the power to think about itself and its knowledge content without having any more to depend on new empirical and rational data. But this intellect admits of degrees of perfection. Al-Farabi defines prophetic intellect as the acquired intellect in its most perform form, which has the distinction of being in frequent contact with Gabriel. That distinction is a matter of divine choice, not human. As the Qur'an says, "But God will choose for His special Mercy whom He will." (The Holy Qur'an, 2:105)

Al-Farabi's theory is relevant to the exploration of the machine in man through his discussion of man's five imaginative powers that are associated with his five internal senses. These are the powers of formal representation (*al-musawwirah*), estimation (*al-wahm*), memory (*al-hafizah*), animal compositive imagination (*al-mutakhayyilah*), and human compositive imagination (*al-mufakkirah*). In my view, if at all AI can emulate and even surpass the powers of human intelligence, it would be in this domain of the internal senses but limited to their machine-like dimension.

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Endnotes

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[i] In Islamic thought, there are non-human forms of natural intelligence. These are animal intelligences and invisible spirits known as jinn found in the terrestrial world and angelic intelligences in the extra-terrestrial world. There is abundant literature on the relationship between animal and human intelligence in both modern science and traditional Islamic thought which, however, study the subject from different philosophical points of view. The relationship between human and angelic intelligences was also extensively discussed in Islamic philosophy and science, but such a discussion is not within the purview of modern science, since supernatural beings such as angels have long been taken out of the Western cosmos. For a detailed discussion of Islamic theory of intelligences, see (particularly Chapter 2) of Bakar (1998).

[ii] A contending assumption in both science and religion is the idea of the heart as the true seat of intelligence and knowledge. In other words, cardiac intelligence is a more fundamental psychological concept and reality than cerebral intelligence.

[iii] Alberto Paura is a physicist at the Department of Physics, University of Perugia, Italy and a researcher at the Italian Institute for the Future, Napoli.

[iv] For an informative article on transhumanism, see Paura (2016).

[v] The Holy Qur'an (3:104). The phrase *amr bi'l-ma'ruf* literally means "enjoining what is known to be good" while the phrase *nahy 'an al-munkar* has the literal meaning of "prohibiting what is evil".

[vi] Islam sees the affirmation of these twin truths as the *raison d'etre* of every prophetic mission in human spiritual history. See The Holy Qur'an (5:48).

[vii] In one verse the Qur'an speaks of cosmic unity as proof of divine unity, meaning that the former unity reflects the latter. See The Holy Qur'an (21:22).

[viii] For al-Farabi's theory see Chapter 2 of Bakar (1998).

[ix] The literal meaning of this word is "acquired intelligence or intellect". The acquired intellect is so-called because it is attained through human efforts based on healthy development of the naturally endowed human intelligence and not through artificial interventions.

Tawḥīdic Epistemology: Reclaiming the Unity of Knowledge

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Abstract

Tawḥīdic epistemology, as articulated by Osman Bakar, is an integrated epistemological framework rooted in Islamic metaphysical principles and aimed at addressing the fragmentation of knowledge in the contemporary Islamic intellectual tradition. It is a constructive response to the intellectual and educational challenges confronting Muslim societies in the twenty-first century. Grounded in the metaphysical principle of the unity of reality, Bakar advocates for a comprehensive integration of revelation (*waḥy*) and reason (*ʿaql*), to reconstruct the foundations of knowledge in the Muslim world. Osman Bakar contends that *tawḥīd* should not only govern theology but must serve as the foundational principle in all branches of knowledge, including the natural, social, and applied sciences. He reinterpreted the traditional Islamic classification of sciences, advocated for the harmony of revelation and reason, and provided a critique of modern secular epistemologies. This study examines the key intellectual sources informing Bakar's tawḥīdic epistemology and the practical implications of his framework for contemporary Muslim education and civilization-building. Drawing primarily from *Tawḥīd and Science* (1992) and *Classification of Knowledge in Islam* (1998), it argues that Osman Bakar offers a compelling vision for a re-sacralised epistemology that remains faithful to Islamic metaphysical commitments while being critically engaged with modern intellectual challenges.

Keywords: *Tawḥīdic* epistemology, Osman Bakar, Islamic education, revelation, reason, unity of knowledge, reform of knowledge

The contemporary Muslim intellectual landscape is marked by a deep epistemological crisis. Muslim societies, faced with the dominance of secular modernity, have witnessed the marginalization of religious knowledge and the compartmentalization of disciplines that were once organically integrated under the overarching principle of *tawḥīd* (divine unity). In response, various scholars have proposed frameworks for the Islamization or integration of knowledge, seeking to recast knowledge as it relates to it. Among these efforts, Osman Bakar has articulated a distinctive framework known as *tawḥīdic* epistemology, which seeks to revive an authentic Islamic philosophy of knowledge for the modern era.

Osman Bakar emphasises the centrality of *tawḥīd* as a metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical principle. For him, *tawḥīd* defines not only the nature of God but also prescribes a particular way of understanding reality, knowledge, and the human role within creation. His framework reaffirms the primacy of revelation (*waḥy*) and restores the proper place of reason (*'aql*) as a faculty to seek, understand, and apply knowledge within the limits prescribed by revelation. His framework, therefore, represents a call for a radical re-grounding of all knowledge upon a metaphysical vision that acknowledges the unity of all existence under Allāh (SWT).

Osman Bakar is among the contemporary Muslim thinkers dedicated to the revival and articulation of an Islamic worldview rooted in *tawḥīd*. His work on *tawḥīdic* epistemology offers a comprehensive framework grounded in revelation, metaphysical unity, and the integration of reason and science. This framework harmonizes the spiritual, ethical, and rational dimensions of knowledge, aiming to cultivate individuals and societies guided by truth, justice, and divine purpose. By placing Allāh (SWT) at the center of the epistemic enterprise, *tawḥīdic* epistemology restores purpose, moral integrity, and spiritual depth to learning.

Tawḥidic epistemology is essential to reforming Muslim education to overcome the "crisis in the Muslim mind" (AbuSulayman, 2004). As pointed out by Muslim thinkers like Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, this crisis stems from the dominance of secular and materialist culture. This dominance has resulted in the marginalization of revelation as the essential source of knowledge and the alienation of the Muslim self from its metaphysical roots, resulting in identity confusion and inferiority complexes. This study discusses Osman Bakar's conceptualization of *tawḥīdic* epistemology, its metaphysical and epistemological

foundations, its critique of modern secular knowledge, and its implications for the Islamization of knowledge and reform of Muslim higher education.

Osman Bakar: A Brief Introduction

Profesor Emeritus Dato Dr Osman Bakar is Distinguished Professor and Al-Ghazzali Chair of Epistemology and Civilizational Studies and Renewal at ISTAC, International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM). He previously served as Director of the Sultan Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Centre for Islamic Studies (SOASCIS), Universiti Brunei Darussalam, and as Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Malaya (1995–2000). Additionally, he was a member of C-100 (Council of 100 Leaders), of The West-Islamic World Initiative for Dialogue, established by the World Economic Forum based in Switzerland. He is concurrently Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Science at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. He has served as an advisor and consultant to a variety of international academic and professional organizations and institutions, including UNESCO and the Qatar Foundation. He was a recipient of a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Harvard University in 1992. In 1994, he was commissioned to establish the Malaysian Chair of Islam in Southeast Asia at George Town University. He has also been a member of the Pertubuhan Bangsa-Bangsa Group of Experts (United Nations Group of Experts) and was responsible for drafting the 1995 World Summit on Social Development Declaration in Copenhagen, Denmark. In 2009, Dato Dr Osman Bakar was included in Malaysia's twenty leading intellectuals and the 500 most influential Muslims globally. He is currently serving as the 7th Rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia.

Osman Bakar's academic background spans both mathematics and philosophy of science. After initial studies in algebra in London, he pursued Islamic philosophy at Temple University in the United States. With such a background, he has always stressed the necessity of balancing modern knowledge with Islam's metaphysical underpinnings. During his studies, he interacted seriously with Seyyed Hossein Nasr and benefited from such interaction. Others influenced Osman Bakar, including Syed Naquib Al-Attas. Osman Bakar also benefited from the writings of thinkers like Al-Farabi (872–950), Ibn Sina (98–-1037), Al-Ghazali (1058–1111), Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998), and Ismail al-Faruqi (1921–1986). However, he has not hesitated to critically engage with classical and modern thinkers, challenging aspects of both

classical and contemporary thought. He critiqued, for instance, the bifurcation of knowledge into "religious" and "secular" as an alienation from the holistic Qur'anic worldview and questioned the uncritical adoption of Western epistemologies in Muslim universities. He also diverges from earlier scholars by advocating engagement with contemporary sciences through reform guided by *tawḥīd*. Notably, he also critiques aspects of al-Ghazālī's distinction between religious and intellectual sciences, suggesting that al-Ghazālī was not always consistent in delineating the boundaries between the two. He found Al-Ghazzali's view of revelation and reason as problematic. "Insofar as al-Ghazali was committed to this view, he appears not to be consistent in his position as to where the line should be drawn between the religious and intellectual sciences" (Bakar, 1998: 267).

Osman Bakar has made major contributions in popularising "Islamic science" and the intellectual discourse of "religion and science", and has contributed to advancing cross-cultural studies, history and philosophy of science. He has authored and edited 40 books and over 300 articles on Islamic thought and civilization, particularly on Islamic philosophy and science. He also writes on contemporary Islam and inter-religious and inter-civilizational dialogue. His writings have been translated into Persian, Turkish, Indonesian, Albanian, and others. His seminal writings, such as *Islam and the Integration of Knowledge* and *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, have led to reform of higher education in the Muslim world using a *tawḥīdic* framework. He advocates for reforming contemporary Muslim thought and education through a *tawḥīdic* epistemological framework to overcome the crisis of fragmented and secularized knowledge. It is a call to revive the intellectual spirit of Islam by restoring the centrality of *tawḥīd* in knowledge production, curriculum design, and institutional reform. The aim is to produce graduates who are spiritually grounded and ethically committed to serve the ummah.

The Foundations of *Tawḥīdic* Epistemology

The Muslim *Ummah* is suffering from an identity crisis mainly because of the loss of *tawḥīdic* epistemology, which was nurtured by scholars of the past who helped elevate the identity of the Ummah as an information society (Bakar, 2019:280). The *tawḥīdic* epistemology approaches knowledge with a categorical position that "since everything is ontologically related to the divine beginning, then all human knowledge is ultimately related to the oneness of Allāh" (Bakar,

2019:288). "*Tawḥīd* is the principle that binds together the various domains of knowledge and makes them parts of a unified whole." It is "the supreme governing principle that provides coherence to all knowledge" (Bakar, 1992:3). *Tawḥīd* asserts that all existence is fundamentally one because it is sustained by the One God. This ontological unity must be mirrored in epistemology: knowledge is not fragmented or compartmentalized, as often seen in modern secular epistemologies, but must be seen as an integrated, cohesive system that reflects the unity inherent in the cosmos.

The classical Muslim scholars, especially during the Golden Age of Islamic civilization, saw no essential division between the religious and the scientific, the sacred and the mundane. All knowledge on the spiritual or the physical world was seen as signs (*āyāt*) pointing toward the Creator (Bakar, 1992:11). Thus, to study nature was itself an act of worship when pursued with the right intention and understanding. However, modern secular epistemologies fragment knowledge into autonomous disciplines devoid of metaphysical grounding. This fragmentation, Bakar argues, is a direct result of the abandonment of a *tawḥīdic* worldview, leading to a disenchanted, materialist understanding of reality (Bakar, 1998:23).

Osman Bakar defines *tawḥīdic* epistemology as a framework of knowledge firmly based on the principle of *tawḥīd* (Oneness of God), which functions as a metaphysical truth as well as a cognitive and ontological foundation. To him, *tawḥīd* implies the integration and unification of various branches of knowledge under a single metaphysical principle (Bakar, 1992:25). "*Tawḥīd* is the ultimate ontological and epistemological foundation of the Islamic worldview… all truths emanate from and return to the One Truth which is God" (Bakar, 1991:23).

Ontologically, *tawḥīd* affirms the unity of all existence as a creation of a single Divine Source. As stated in the Qur'an 39:62, "Allāh is the Creator of all things, and He is, over all things, Disposer of affairs." The ontological structure is predicated on the principle of *tawḥīd.* It is a metaphysical principle that shapes the reality (*wujūd*). Al-Ghazālī affirms that God alone is *al-Ḥaqq al-Mubīn,* the Absolute Reality. Everything else is dependent (*mumkin al-wujūd*) upon His will and sustaining power (Al-Ghazālī, 2004, 4: 220). Similarly, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī constructs a philosophical argument for the unity and necessity of God as the sole ontological ground of the cosmos (Rāzī, 1987, 1: 53–58). What this implies is that the universe reflects the oneness of its

Creator, and that all created entities depend on Allāh (SWT) as stated in Qur'an 35:15: "O mankind, you are those in need of Allāh, while Allāh is Free of need, the Praiseworthy." Thus, there exists no metaphysical dualism and human beings as vicegerents (*khalīfah*) of Allāh (SWT) are bound to recognize, reflect upon, and respond to the signs of His oneness.

Epistemologically, *tawḥīd* affirms that all true knowledge emanates from only one source, Allāh (SWT). Osman Bakar (1991:13) emphasizes that *tawḥīd* is a comprehensive epistemic framework that shapes the understanding of knowledge. *Tawḥīd* constitutes the metaphysical and epistemological principle of unity in Islamic thought. It is the ultimate ground of coherence in the Islamic conception of knowledge." In this framework, *ʿilm* (knowledge) is not secular or value-neutral but hierarchically structured and teleologically oriented. There are several sources of knowledge including:

- *waḥy* (revelation),
- '*aql* (intellect),
- *ḥiss* (sense perception), and
- *kashf* (intuition)

All these leads to attain *ḥikmah* (wisdom) and *yaqīn* (certainty), leading to firm faith (*īmān*) and righteous action (*ʿamal ṣāliḥ*).

Osman Bakar (2012: 44) identifies three key principles that underpin tawḥīdic epistemology: These are:

1. Unity of Knowledge. It means that all knowledge ultimately originates from Allāh (SWT) and is united under His Oneness. This eliminates the sacred-secular dichotomy.
2. Order and Harmony: meaning knowledge reflects the order of the cosmos and is categorized meaningfully. Disciplines are interconnected, not isolated.
3. Hierarchy of Knowledge stating that knowledge is not equal in status. Spiritual and metaphysical knowledge occupies the highest place, followed by rational and empirical knowledge.

First, the unity of knowledge is rooted in *tawḥīd*, which implies that all knowledge ultimately originates from a single, divine source Allāh (SWT). It ensures that all branches of learning are integrated within the framework of *tawḥīd*. Second, order and harmony reflect the interconnectedness and balance in the intellectual and cosmic order. Finally, the hierarchy of knowledge prioritizes spiritual and metaphysical knowledge while affirming the value of rational and empirical inquiry, each with its rightful place. Epistemologically, *tawḥīd* requires that all knowledge must ultimately point to, be interpreted through, and remain accountable to this Divine unity (Bakar, 1999:12). Evidently, *tawḥīdic* epistemology differs from modern epistemologies, which are grounded in secularism, materialism, and epistemic dualism.

In *tawḥīdic* epistemology, knowledge is not neutral or value-free. It must serve a higher moral and spiritual purpose, aligning human understanding with divine truth. Knowledge in this context is a trust (*amānah*) from God and must be pursued in accordance with divine guidance. The Qur'an (96:1, 3) instructs believers to "Recite in the name of your Lord Who created" and "Recite: and your Lord is Most Generous." *Tawḥīd* is the ontological and epistemological axis around which all knowledge revolves. "The principle of *tawḥīd* must serve as the central organizing element in the classification, pursuit, and application of knowledge" (Bakar, 1991: 29). Drawing from Qur'anic concepts such as *ʿilm*, *ḥikmah*, and *ʿaql*, Bakar emphasizes that knowledge acquisition must begin with ontological recognition of Allāh (SWT) as the ultimate source of truth.

Revelation and Reason: A Harmonious Relationship

A defining characteristic of *tawḥīdic* epistemology is the harmonious relationship between revelation (*waḥy*) and reason (*'aql*). Revelation is the ultimate source of all knowledge, providing the metaphysical and ethical framework within which reason operates. Reason, in turn, serves as an instrument to understand, elaborate, and apply the truths revealed through *waḥy*. The Qur'an 3:190–191; 38:29, frequently invites believers to reflect and understand, affirming the legitimacy of reason. However, reason must operate within the bounds of revelation, not independently of it. "Islamic intellectual tradition upholds the primacy of revelation but does not negate the instrumental and interpretive value of reason" (Bakar, 1999: 28).

In *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, Bakar highlights the traditional Islamic sciences' division of knowledge into the transmitted sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-naqliyyah*) based directly on revelation,

and the intellectual sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-ʿaqliyyah*) developed through the exercise of reason (Bakar, 1998:47–50). This division was hierarchical rather than oppositional. Revealed knowledge was at the apex because of its absolute certainty, while allowing for the rational sciences to flourish under its guidance (Bakar, 1998:47–49). By contrast, modern science has become disenchanted and desacralized, operating within a materialistic and mechanistic worldview that disconnects nature from its Creator (Bakar, 1998:45). What is needed, therefore, is not secularization but the "sacralization of science" grounded in the Islamic worldview. It means reason must recognize its dependence upon divine revelation for its ultimate grounding.

Bakar draws upon historical examples from Muslim civilization to demonstrate the flourishing of rational inquiry under the guidance of revelation. He highlights how scholars such as Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Rushd integrated Aristotelian logic, Neoplatonic metaphysics, and Islamic theology into a coherent intellectual tradition that did not sacrifice the primacy of divine truth (Bakar, 1998:76). Today, Bakar contends, Muslim societies must reclaim this integrated vision. The neglect of either reason or revelation leads to epistemological imbalance: blind fideism on one hand, or secular rationalism on the other (Bakar, 1992:29).

The Classification of Knowledge: Restoring Hierarchy and Unity

A pivotal element of Osman Bakar's framework is his elaboration of the traditional Islamic classification of sciences. Drawing upon classical scholars such as al-Fārābī, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Khaldūn, Bakar contends that Muslim scholars developed sophisticated schemes that ordered the sciences according to their proximity to divine knowledge and their function in human life (Bakar, 1998:60). Religious sciences including Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), *ḥadīth* studies, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) were situated at the top because they directly concerned knowledge of God's will. Intellectual sciences, including logic, mathematics, and natural philosophy, were ranked according to their ability to support religious understanding and societal well-being. Both categories ultimately serve to deepen human understanding of God's creation and law (Bakar, 1998:70).

Osman Bakar identifies three categories of knowledge:

- Revealed knowledge (*al-'ulūm al-naqliyyah*),
- Rational knowledge (*al-'ulūm al-'aqliyyah*), and

- Applied knowledge (*al-ʿulūm al-taṭbīqiyyah*).

This tripartite schema is central to his *tawḥīdic* epistemological framework and reflects both the traditional Islamic understanding of the hierarchy of sciences and a response to the modern fragmentation of knowledge (Bakar, 1991). Each category corresponds to a different source, method, and purpose of knowing, but all are ultimately unified under the principle of *tawḥīd.*

The Revealed Knowledge category includes knowledge transmitted through divine revelation, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It includes such disciplines as:

- *Tafsīr* (Qur'anic exegesis),
- *Ḥadīth* (Prophetic traditions),
- *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence),
- *Kalām* (theology),
- and other sciences developed to preserve, interpret, and apply the revealed texts.

To Osman Bakar, this knowledge occupies the highest rank because it comes directly from Allāh (SWT), the all-knowing (*al-ʿAlīm*), and provides the metaphysical foundation and ethical compass for all other forms of knowledge. It offers information, wisdom and guidance about ultimate realities, human purpose, and moral responsibility.

Rational Knowledge includes disciplines based on reasoning and intellectual inquiry, such as:

- Logic,
- Philosophy,
- Mathematics,
- Natural sciences (physics, biology, astronomy),
- and social sciences.

This category of knowledge is acquired through *ʿaql* (intellect) and *naẓar* (reflection). It helps believers to reflect on the signs of Allāh (SWT) in the universe (*āyāt fī al-āfāq*), as required by the Qur'an. It helps Muslims to appreciate the unity, order, and wisdom of creation, reinforcing the principle of *tawḥīd* (Bakar, 1999). However, Osman Bakar insists that this knowledge must be guided by revelation.

Applied Knowledge refers to practical and technical disciplines, such as:

- Engineering,
- Architecture,
- Agriculture,
- Medicine,
- Information technology,
- Artisanal and craft-based skills.

These fields are essential for the advancement of civilization and the material well-being of humanity. This knowledge, while "lower" in the ontological hierarchy, has moral significance if pursued within the ethical parameters set by revelation. Applied knowledge must be ethically governed and oriented toward the common good.

The three-fold categorization of knowledge serves to restructure the entire landscape of modern knowledge so that it reflects the unity of truth and the centrality of Allāh (SWT) in all domains. By assigning proper epistemic weight to each category and ensuring their integration within a *Tawḥīdic* worldview, Osman Bakar reconciles the sacred and the rational, the theoretical and the practical, the spiritual and the empirical. Thus, in this model, all forms of knowledge contribute to fulfilling the assigned role of believers as the *khalīfatullāhi fī al-arḍ*, the vicegerent of Allāh (SWT) on earth (Nasr, 1981).

The highest form of knowledge is *ma'rifah* (knowledge of God), while other sciences derive their value in proportion to their service to this higher purpose (Bakar, 2014:53). Contrary to modern egalitarian or fragmented views of disciplines, *tawḥīdic* epistemology asserts a purposeful and metaphysically grounded hierarchy of knowledge. (Bakar, 1992: 31–35).

Significantly, Bakar notes that the natural sciences were traditionally not seen as "profane" or "secular" but rather as noble pursuits when undertaken in recognition of the metaphysical significance of the cosmos as God's creation (Bakar, 1992:35). Studying nature, in this context, becomes an act of deciphering the divine signs embedded throughout the universe (Al-Qur'an 41:53).

In contrast, the modern Western classification of sciences is based largely on utilitarian or technical considerations, devoid of metaphysical orientation. Bakar advocates a return to an Islamic model that acknowledges both the intrinsic and instrumental value of knowledge, thereby restoring a hierarchy grounded in ultimate truth rather than pragmatic usefulness.

Implications for Educational Reform and Intellectual Renewal

Osman Bakar argues that Muslim universities, modelled largely on secular Western institutions, have failed to cultivate *tawḥīdic* consciousness among students and scholars. The result has been the production of fragmented individuals incapable of integrating their scientific or professional expertise with their religious and moral commitments (Bakar, 1998:120). This crisis is not merely academic but civilizational. Without a unified epistemology, Muslim societies cannot hope to achieve genuine progress that is both materially beneficial and spiritually uplifting. Bakar warns that the continued imitation of secular Western models will only deepen the epistemological and moral crises plaguing the ummah (Bakar, 1992: 42). Thus, the revival of *tawḥīdic* epistemology is not an optional intellectual exercise but an urgent necessity for the survival and flourishing of Islamic civilization.

To address this crisis, Osman Bakar proposes curricular reforms that integrate religious and rational sciences, enabling students to see the interconnections between different forms of knowledge (Bakar, 1998:140). At the practical level, these reforms would entail:

- Reintegrating metaphysical principles into the teaching of natural and social sciences.
- Encouraging interdisciplinary research that transcends the artificial boundaries between "religious" and "secular" disciplines.
- Training scholars who are both deeply rooted in the Islamic intellectual tradition and proficient in modern scientific methods.
- Emphasizing ethics, aesthetics, and spirituality as integral components of all fields of study.

Such reforms would contribute to the emergence of a new generation of Muslim scholars and professionals capable of contributing meaningfully to the Islamic intellectual and the broader global academic landscape.

Comparative Reflections: Bakar and Other Muslim Thinkers

Bakar's *tawḥīdic* epistemology may be fruitfully compared to other contemporary Muslim efforts at epistemological reconstruction. Thinkers such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr have also emphasized the need to re-sacralize knowledge.

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas never used the term *tawḥīdic* epistemology. However, to him, knowledge must be rooted in *tawḥīd*, which functions as the metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological foundation of his entire worldview. His theory of knowledge or what he calls the *Islamic concept of knowledge,* is shaped by a commitment to integrating all branches of knowledge under *tawḥīd, which* is the ultimate criterion for distinguishing true from false knowledge (1978). Knowledge to be valid must acknowledge the unity and sovereignty of Allāh (SWT) and the finality of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). As such, knowledge is not value-free; it is infused with meaning and directed toward the recognition of Allāh (SWT) and one's place in the cosmos. Thus, al-Attas fully subscribes to the core ideas associated with *tawḥīdic* epistemology, such as the unity of knowledge, the integration of reason and revelation, and the metaphysical grounding of epistemology in *tawḥīd.* Al-Attas further argues that Islamic education must begin with the inculcation of the correct worldview, one that is metaphysically and ethically grounded in *tawḥīd*. This worldview, or *ruʾyat al-islām li al-wujūd*, encompasses the totality of existence, human purpose, knowledge, and ethics. It stands in contrast to the secular worldview, which divorces knowledge from its metaphysical and moral sources. Al-Attas's "Islamization of knowledge" project is essentially a process of restoring knowledge to its rightful place within the unified structure of reality defined by *tawḥīd*. He emphasizes the integration of reason (*'aql*) and revelation (*waḥy*), rejecting the separation between reason and revelation often found in modern secular epistemologies. In al-Attas's conception, the intellect is a God-given faculty that must be guided by revelation and *adab* to lead to certain knowledge (*ʿilm*). He defines the "Islamization of knowledge" as a process of "liberating knowledge from secular interpretations and restoring its Islamic meaning" (al-Attas, 1995: 43). This involves isolating knowledge from Western influences and then integrating Islamic elements. This view resonates with the fundamental aim of a *tawḥīdic* epistemology, which is to maintain the harmony between divine guidance and human reasoning, so that knowledge leads to wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and proximity to God (*maʿrifah*).

To Ismail al-Faruqi, to Islamize knowledge is "to recast knowledge as Islam relates to it." This requires "to redefine, and reorder the data, to rethink the reasoning and relating of the data, to reevaluate the conclusions, to re-project the goals and to so in such a way as to make the disciplines enrich the vision and serve the cause of Islam (al-Faruqi, 1982:15). Ismail al-Faruqi (d. 1986) made a significant contribution to the articulation of *tawḥīdic epistemology.* His approach was explicitly rooted in the centrality of *tawḥīd.* In his words: "The unity of God implies the unity of truth, the unity of knowledge, and the unity of life." (Al- Faruqi, 1982: 5) — *Al- Tawḥīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life, 1982.*This unity demands the integration of all fields of knowledge—natural, human, and revealed—within a single cohesive framework inspired by divine revelation. He diagnosed a deep epistemological crisis in the Muslim world, caused by the bifurcation of knowledge into secular and religious spheres, and the marginalization of Islamic metaphysics and ethics in modern disciplines. His remedy was a re-unification of knowledge through *tawḥīd*, where divine revelation provides the ultimate criterion for truth. According to al-Faruqi, knowledge is not value-neutral. It is meant to fulfill man's role as *khalīfat Allāh fī al-arḍ* (vicegerent of God on earth) and is tied to moral accountability and the higher objectives of the *Sharīʿah*. While affirming the utility of human reason and empirical inquiry, al-Faruqi emphasized that reason must operate within the boundaries of divine revelation. This approach resonates with scholars like al-Ghazālī, Al-Attas and Osman Bakar.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who, according to Osman Bakar (2008:28) is "the pioneer who has done most to articulate the metaphysical and epistemological foundations of the Islamic view of science in modern times…" Nasr views *tawḥīd* as the metaphysical principle that governs all levels of reality. In his view, knowledge (*ʿilm*) must reflect the hierarchical structure of being, wherein divine and sacred knowledge is at the apex, followed by intellectual, rational, and empirical forms. He criticizes modern science for desacralizing nature and replacing wisdom with utility. Nasr's solution is the restoration of a *sacred science* that recognizes the symbolic and metaphysical dimensions of nature and human existence (Nasr, 1993). Nasr's vision of *tawḥīd* is epistemological, ontological, and esoteric, seeking to reintegrate the fragmented disciplines of modernity into a sacred order of knowing that leads to the Ultimate Reality (*al-ḥaqq*).

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, meanwhile, champions the concept of "sacred science" (scientia sacra) to comprehend the world and its relationship to the divine. He argues that modern science is "profane"

and neglects the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of reality. Nasr's emphasis on the "sacred science" resonates with Bakar's insistence on metaphysical foundations. However, Bakar's approach is distinctive for its detailed analysis of the traditional classification of sciences, and its nuanced discussion of how the natural sciences can be reclaimed within a *tawḥīdic* framework without rejecting scientific rationality itself. Rather than advocating a wholesale rejection of modern science, Bakar calls for its critical reformulation considering Islamic metaphysical principles (Bakar, 1992:55). His work is marked by a greater systematicity in ontology, a deeper engagement with contemporary scientific epistemology, and a more practical vision for the integration of science and revelation.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Osman Bakar share several foundational commitments. Both uphold the idea that knowledge must reflect the unity, order, and purpose embedded in the Qur'ānic worldview. Both believe that the crisis of Muslim thought cannot be overcome without returning to the metaphysical and epistemological roots of *tawḥīd*. And both reject the secular bifurcation between sacred and profane knowledge, advocating instead for an integrated, hierarchical, and purposeful approach to learning. Where Nasr speaks more to the inner life of the intellect and spirit, Bakar addresses the external structures of thought and education.

The epistemological crisis in the Muslim world cannot be addressed without a comprehensive rearticulation of *tawḥīd* as the foundation of knowledge. Naquib al-Attas, Ismail al-Faruqi, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Osman Bakar represent four critical pillars in this endeavor. They have adopted four converging yet distinct approaches to the epistemological crisis of the Muslim world. All of them affirm that no true knowledge is possible without recognizing the unity of the Creator and the coherence of His creation. They affirm *tawḥīd* as the central epistemological and metaphysical principle of Islam, but with varying emphases. Yet they differ in how this affirmation translates into educational and epistemological reform. Al-Attas focuses on conceptual purification, metaphysical grounding, and the restoration of *adab*. Al-Faruqi's emphasis is on strategic restructuring of academic disciplines through Islamization. Seyyed Hossein Nasr advocates for a return to sacred metaphysics, rooted in the perennial philosophy. Osman Bakar offers a systematic classification, practical reform strategy, and direct engagement with modern science. Together, these thinkers provide the Muslim ummah with a rich spectrum of resources to restore the integrity, purpose, and transcendence of knowledge in a fragmented world (See Table 1).

Table 1: Similarities and Differences among Muslim Thinkers

Category	**Thinkers**			
	Osman Bakar	**Ismail al-Faruqi**	**Naquib al-Attas**	**Syed Hossein Nasr**
Foundation	*Tawḥīd*	*Tawḥīd*	*Tawḥīd* coupled with *adab*	*Tawḥīd* as metaphysical core.
Methodology	Integration of revelation, reason, and science	Restructuring modern disciplines as Islam relates to it	Islamization of key concepts; cultivation of *adab*	Reviving traditional sciences; critique of modern science via perennial philosophy
Critique of Modernity	Modern science is reductionist and fragmented	Secular disciplines fragment knowledge, weaken unity	Modernity causes loss of *adab,* confusion of knowledge	Modern science desacralizes nature; alienates man from God and cosmos
Goal	Holistic *Tawḥīdic* epistemology	Unified Islamic intellectual tradition	Restoring *adab* in individuals and institutions	Re-establish sacred knowledge and cosmology

Source: Author's synthesis from the works of Osman Bakar, Ismail al-Faruqi, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

Conclusion

Osman Bakar's *tawḥīdic* epistemology presents a coherent and systematic framework for the reconstruction of Islamic intellectual life. Grounded in the metaphysical principle of *tawḥīd,* it seeks to restore the unity of knowledge, reaffirms the harmony between revelation and reason, and provide a critique of the fragmentation and secularization of modern epistemologies.

By calling for a re-sacralization of reason and a reintegration of the sciences under the guidance of divine revelation, Bakar articulates a path forward for Muslim societies in pursuit of authentic intellectual and civilizational renewal. His thought constitutes an essential resource for scholars, educators, and policymakers committed to rebuilding Islamic civilization on firm metaphysical and intellectual foundations.

In an era marked by a profound global epistemological crises, Bakar's *tawḥīdic* vision stands as a beacon, reminding scholars and students alike that true knowledge must ultimately manifest the unity, wisdom, and mercy of the One who is the source of all being, and mercy to people of the whole world (*raḥmatan lil 'alamīn*).

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A Project Still in Motion? Naleemiah Institute of Islamic Studies and the Quest for Integration of Knowledge in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Scholarly analyses of Muslim engagement with modern Western epistemology reveal three major responses: early reformers such as Afghani and Abduh emphasized the compatibility of Islam and the West; critics like Maududi rejected secular epistemologies outright; and the Islamization of Knowledge (IOK) movement sought to reorganize modern disciplines on the basis of Islamic principles, reconstructing knowledge according to the Islamic worldview. Building on these earlier currents, the 'integration of knowledge' framework has emerged, sparking debates over its distinction from IOK. However, this discourse has largely developed in Muslim-majority contexts, often overlooking Muslim minority experiences. In this context, this paper examines the Naleemiah Institute of Islamic Studies (NIIS), a prominent Islamic studies institution in Sri Lanka. NIIS aspires to produce religious scholars trained in both Islamic and human sciences, serving as a case study for this examination. Through an analysis

of NIIS's intellectual foundations, curriculum evolution, and graduate perspectives, the study finds that NIIS should be considered a pioneering academic institution in manifesting integrative aspirations. Since its inception, it has incorporated this spirit, producing graduates well-equipped to reflect Islam from a multidisciplinary perspective. Being a privately funded institution, this represents a significant achievement in a Muslim minority context. However, its impact has been constrained by methodological ambiguities. The findings underscore the need for clearer epistemological frameworks and institutional strategies to bridge Islamic and modern knowledge meaningfully. By centring a minority perspective, this study also argues that scholarly discussions on the integration of knowledge and related discourses, such as *Tawḥīdic* Epistemology (TE), should consider minority experiences and the specific challenges they face in engaging with these epistemic frameworks. It should explore ways to foster greater collaboration and mutual exchange of ideas, thereby advancing the discourse to make it truly global and relevant.

Keywords: Integration of Knowledge, Naleemiah Institute of Islamic Studies, *Tawḥīdic* Epistemology, Muslim Minority, Islamic Reform

Introduction

Debates over knowledge, authority, and tradition have long shaped the intellectual trajectories of Muslim societies, but these dynamics took on new urgency in the wake of colonialism (Zacky & Moniruzzaman, 2023). The colonial encounter did more than impose foreign rule. It introduced an epistemological order rooted in Enlightenment rationality and empirical science that gradually displaced classical Islamic modes of knowing (Masood, 2007, & Tabrizi, 1996). Revelation, spirituality, and inherited traditions were pushed to the margins, giving rise to a sharp dichotomy between what was considered 'rational' and what was viewed as 'traditional' knowledge (Ingram, 2018, p. 30–35). This rupture not only transformed the foundations of Muslim education but also spurred a range of reformist projects aimed at reasserting Islamic intellectual autonomy.

Scholarly analyses of Muslim engagement with modernist epistemology reveal three key, interconnected responses that have shaped the trajectory of contemporary Islamic thought. The first response, exemplified by early reformers such as Jamal al-Din Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Sayyid Ahmad Khan, emphasized the inherent compatibility between Islam and modern science. These thinkers contended that empiricism and scientific reasoning were not only consistent with the Islamic intellectual tradition but could also serve to enrich and revitalize it. Embracing modern scientific knowledge, they argued, was essential for the intellectual and civilizational renewal of Muslim societies (Tabrizi, 1996; Furlow, 1996). In contrast, Abul A'la Maududi articulated a more critical position, portraying modern educational institutions as agents of secularization that undermined Islamic identity and ethical foundations. He maintained that Islamic and Western worldviews are epistemologically incompatible and therefore called for an educational system rooted firmly in divine revelation and moral purpose (Maududi, 1993, p. 24–41). A third, more comprehensive response emerged in the 1970s with the IOK movement. This ambitious initiative sought to critically reassess the epistemic foundations of modern disciplines and to reform educational curricula in accordance with Islamic principles. Rather than rejecting Western knowledge outright, proponents of IOK advocated for its selective reorganization through an Islamic worldview, one that integrates scientific inquiry with religious epistemology. Notably, the Islamization movement did not manifest as a monolithic project; rather, it encompassed a diverse range of approaches, methodologies, and intellectual orientations under its broad umbrella (Stenberg, 1996). Building on this trajectory, scholars since the early 2000s have increasingly embraced the

concept of the 'integration of knowledge' as an alternative or complementary framework. This shift has generated ongoing debate about whether integration merely rearticulates the goals of Islamization or represents a fundamentally distinct approach project (Moten, 2023).

What is clear from this evolving discussion, however, is that the discourse on integration of knowledge has been shaped primarily within the socio-political and intellectual contexts of Muslim-majority societies. Institutions such as the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and Islamic universities in regions like the Middle East and Southeast Asia, particularly the International Islamic University Malaysia, have significantly influenced the development of this discourse, defining its conceptual language, priorities, and institutional strategies (Keim, 2017). Yet this dominant focus has tended to marginalize the experiences and perspectives of Muslim-minority contexts. In these settings, communities must grapple with unique challenges such as navigating secular education systems, marginalization of Islamic institutions, and legal restrictions on religious expression (Sahin, 2023). At the same time, minority contexts present distinct opportunities for reimagining knowledge production, ethics, and education in pluralistic societies. Despite this potential, meaningful dialogue and collaboration between scholars and institutions in Muslim-majority and minority contexts remain limited. This lack of exchange has contributed to a fragmented and uneven development of the integration of knowledge project, one that risks overlooking the lived realities and intellectual contributions of significant segments of the global Muslim community. Bridging this gap is essential for constructing a more inclusive and globally relevant vision for Islamic knowledge reform.

Against this backdrop, this paper examines the experience of the NIIS as a pioneering institutional initiative that engaged with the discourse on the integration of knowledge in Sri Lanka, a country where Muslims have lived as a minority for over a millennium. The paper seeks to broaden the ongoing discourse on the integration of Islamic and modern knowledge by foregrounding the experiences of a Muslim minority context, which is often overlooked in debates predominantly shaped by majority-Muslim societies. Specifically, the study explores NIIS's engagement with integration of knowledge discourse through three interrelated dimensions: the institute's ideational origins, curricular developments, and the perspectives of its recent graduates. It argues that while the NIIS has made notable contributions, particularly through its academic programmes, its broader impact has been constrained by the absence of conceptual clarity and a lack of well-defined methodologies for integration. To substantiate this analysis, the paper is organized into four sections. Section two contextualizes the religious

reform and educational debates within Sri Lanka. Section three offers an institutional overview of the NIIS. Section four provides a critical examination of the intellectual foundations of the institute, the evolution of its curriculum, and how graduates of the NIIS view the institute's engagement with the discourse itself. The paper concludes with a set of modest recommendations aimed at enhancing the intellectual coherence and institutional effectiveness of NIIS's integrative efforts. Methodologically, this study employed a qualitative research design. Data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources, including interviews and relevant documents. A thematic content analysis approach was applied to interpret and analyse the data, ensuring a systematic examination of emerging themes, patterns, and insights within the research context.

The Genealogy of Muslim Religious Education Reform Debate in Sri Lanka: A Brief Overview

The NIIS emerged from long discussions about how Islamic knowledge should be understood and applied in late- and post-colonial Sri Lanka. This intellectual engagement can be traced to the immediate aftermath of European colonial rule, which brought about profound transformations in the structures of knowledge production (Shukri, 1986, p. 369–372). Like their counterparts elsewhere in the Muslim world, Sri Lanka Muslims were compelled to grapple with new epistemological paradigms introduced by colonial powers. Colonial governance was underpinned by legal, political, and economic systems that drew upon modern Western epistemologies, resulting in a sharp bifurcation between traditional Islamic sciences and the emergent secular disciplines (Lumbard, 2023). Osman Bakar characterizes this rupture as an 'epistemic sectarianism' denoting the growing divide between religious and secular, as well as traditional and modern, systems of knowledge (Aljunid, 2022, p.41–64). For the Muslim minority in Sri Lanka, navigating this epistemic transformation necessitated engagement with secular forms of education, including science and the English language, to attain socio-economic mobility within the colonial order. Yet, the adoption of secular educational models was not ideologically neutral; rather, it carried with it an implicit attempt to marginalize religious knowledge and relegate religion to the private sphere. In response, Muslim intellectuals and community leaders began to critically reassess both inherited religious paradigms and modern knowledge in a fine way of reconciliation and engagement.

In colonial Ceylon, one of the earliest and most influential Muslim reformers, M.C. Siddi Lebbe (d. 1898), responded to the intellectual and socio-political transformations of his era.

Confronting the marginalization of Muslims within the colonial order, he championed the pursuit of modern education as a necessary strategy for communal advancement. Siddi Lebbe contended that the acquisition of modern knowledge need not come at the expense of Islamic faith. Rather, he envisioned a model in which Islamic principles could serve as a moral and intellectual framework through which Muslims engage with the modern world (McKinley, & Xavier, 2017). For him, the task was not to reject modernity, but to shape it in ways consistent with the ethical and spiritual foundations of Islam. Against this background, Sidde Lebbe critiqued traditional Islamic learning system and religious leaders for their inability to lead the community through responding to new emerging questions and understanding sprite of the religion (Anas, 2007, p.345–348). He further criticized the existing curriculum of the Madrasah education system, highlighting that these religious institutions continue to use outdated textbooks published centuries ago. Sidde Lebbe (2023) uses the subject of logic as a case study to support his argument:

> In teaching general subjects in the humanities, our institutions still rely on Arabic texts that were written long ago. For example, consider the subject of logic. The Arabs initially inherited this subject from the Greeks and then developed it further. However, Europeans later adopted it from the Arabs, critiqued it, and added new dimensions. As a result, modern logic is significantly different from Greek logic. Our religious leaders who teach in the Madrasas need to understand these evolving dynamics of humanities. (p. 78)

It is interesting to note that after criticizing the traditional learning system, he urged Sri Lankan Muslims to envision a university that combines Islamic religious education with modern education. He (2023) suggests that similar colleges have emerged in India and that Sri Lankan Muslims should consider them as a model to replicate on the island.

> There is a large educational institution in Hyderabad, India, known as Deccan Educational Institute. Students who study there are exposed to both revealed knowledge and worldly knowledge, valuing both equally. Upon completion of their course, graduates will be awarded a certificate. (p.114)

Sidde Lebbe emphasized the importance of integrating modern knowledge into Islamic religious education. He also insisted that religious knowledge should be approached from a new perspective. He urged Muslims to view their fundamental rituals not just as actions, but as

activities embedded in profound ethical significance and teachings. Additionally, he called for religious leaders to teach Islam in the light of its true spirit (Ameen, 2023, p. 44–46).

Sidde Lebbe's groundbreaking call for reform in religious education has had a lasting impact on Muslim educational discussions over the past two centuries. His vision, which emphasized integrating modern subjects with Islamic learning, resonated well beyond his lifetime, inspiring subsequent generations of civil society leaders and religious figures. Notable Muslim reformers such as A.M.A. Azeez, who is closely associated with the establishment of the NIIS, continued to advocate for the principles that Sidde Lebbe championed. They argued for educational models that could prepare Muslims to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world without compromising their religious identity. This ongoing discourse should be viewed as a progression, with each wave of reform responding to new socio-political realities. In this historical and intellectual context, the establishment of the NIIS is not an isolated event but part of a broader effort to reconcile Islamic epistemological traditions with the challenges and opportunities of a modern, postcolonial society, while also preserving the community's cultural and spiritual heritage.

NIIS: An Institutional Overview

The NIIS was established in 1973 by MIM Naleem. His contributions represent a significant case study on the impact of philanthropy on educational empowerment in Sri Lanka. Philanthropy entails providing financial support to address the root causes of social issues, while charity is often limited to occasional assistance (Terway, A. & Ridge, N.Y., 2019, p. 06). MIM Naleem, a renowned gem merchant and active community leader, initiated and supported various projects aimed at improving educational opportunities for the Muslim community. His efforts set a benchmark for Muslim philanthropic activities in the country. Among his notable initiatives was the NIIS, which he founded to introduce innovative approaches to religious education in Sri Lanka. This project was developed with the help of academics and close friends from his hometown, China Fort in Beruwala (Shukri, 1993). The mission of NIIS is to cultivate intellectually sound, professionally competent, morally enriched, balanced, and integrated individuals committed to generating and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, training, learning, and research, ultimately contributing to society, the nation, and humanity. The goal is to produce a new generation of scholars and thinkers who are multi-skilled, economically independent, and equipped to respond to the myriad challenges of a rapidly changing world.

NIIS is organized into two main departments: the Centre for Foundation Studies (CFS) and the Faculty of Islamic Studies (FIS). CFS provides students with foundational knowledge in Arabic and Islamic studies while preparing them for the governmental Advanced Level examination. Additionally, it offers instruction in languages and moral subjects at this level. FIS offers advanced courses in Islamic studies along with selected secular subjects. FIS students could enroll with state universities as external candidates for recognized degrees. The NIIS also includes an independent unit called the 'Unit for Extra-Curricular Activities,' which is designed to develop students' skills. This unit trains students in writing, speaking, and other essential skills. Academic conferences foster an environment of critical thinking and intellectual engagement. The rich library at NIIS houses more than 45,000 books in various languages, primarily English, Arabic, Sinhala, and Tamil. Furthermore, NIIS is committed to expanding its academic outreach. In line with this mission, it established the Academy for Development, Research, and Training (ADRT) in 2006. ADRT regularly conducts training programs for diverse groups, including media personnel, lecturers at Arabic colleges, and community leaders. The Naleemiah Virtual Learning Centre (NVLC), launched in 2020, offers a variety of online courses, such as *Qur'anic* Interpretation and Translation, to the public. The Research and Publication Unit plays a crucial role in promoting research and publications, including the release of a quarterly research journal titled 'Islamiya Sinthanai' (Islamic Thought in Tamil). Additionally, the Institute of Arabic Language offers courses aimed at enhancing students' Arabic language skills. Lastly, the Salam Centre for Peace and Dialogue seek to promote social harmony through inter-religious interactive programs and publications.

Results and Discussion

1.0 NIIS and Integration of Knowledge: An Intellectual Genealogy

The Idea of an Islamic University in Sri Lanka: A.M.A. Azeez's Intellectual Vision

The intellectual foundations of the NIIS were shaped by the contributions of various scholars. Among these was AMA Azeez, a prominent Sri Lankan Muslim educationist and one of the institute's founders, who played a pivotal role. His writings in the 1960s on Muslim education reform highlighted the community's educational underperformance and its implications in a pluralistic society. Azeez attributed this lag partly to a narrow focus on the spiritual aspects of Islam, arguing that it needed to be balanced with secular knowledge. He called for a new philosophy of Islamic education-one that integrates Islamic teachings and modern sciences into

a unified worldview. Azeez urged Muslim leaders to train scholars who could interpret religious teachings in relation to contemporary socio-political realities. He also criticized the traditional madrasah system for being outdated and inadequate, advocating instead for an alternative educational framework (Azeez, 1963, p. 131–36). His landmark essay, 'We Want an Islamic University,' written in the early 1970s, outlined this vision. While it did not directly lead to the founding of NIIS, it contributed to broader discussions that eventually influenced the institute's establishment and mission. In that essay, Azeez (1963) famously stated that:

> We cannot overcome our significant challenges without cultivating Islamic scholars who are equally proficient in both Islamic and modern knowledge. In our current situation, we have struggled to find Islamic scholars who possess such a diverse range of expertise. As a community, we must strive to produce religious scholars who have a deep understanding of both Islamic and modern knowledge. Additionally, it is crucial to recognize that our traditional religious educational system requires substantial reform. (p.117)

AMA Azeez's reformist thought was deeply shaped by the philosophy of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, whose ideas he consciously sought to apply to the Sri Lankan Muslim context (Mahroof, 1993). In the preface to his collected essays, Azeez acknowledged that his reflections on the socio-political and educational challenges facing Sri Lankan Muslims were written through the lens of Iqbal's intellectual vision (Azeez, 1963, p. iv). Central to Azeez's engagement with Iqbal was the latter's emphasis on reconciling Islamic spirituality with the demands of modernity. He was particularly influenced by Iqbal's call for a dynamic interaction with the modern scientific world, one that remains rooted in an Islamic ethical and spiritual framework (Azeez, 1963, p. 218–22).

As an educationist, AMA Azeez consistently emphasized the necessity of reforming Islamic education through a holistic approach grounded in the Islamic worldview. He argued that meaningful transformation within the Muslim community could only be achieved by cultivating a new generation of Islamic scholars who are not only rooted in traditional religious knowledge but also well-versed in the modern social sciences and contemporary realities. Azeez advocated for the establishment of institutions that would foster this integrated model of learning. In line with this intellectual trajectory, Azeez later became involved in the NIIS, recognizing in it a concrete step toward realizing his educational reform agenda (Shukri, 2020).

Alongside AMA Azeez, scholars such as Tasm Nadvi and ALM Ibrahim were instrumental in shaping the early intellectual framework of the NIIS. Tasm Nadvi, a graduate of Al-Azhar University and the institute's first principal in 1973, emphasized that while traditional Islamic educational institutions had preserved the religiosity of Sri Lankan Muslims, they were ill-equipped to address the complexities of the modern world. He argued for a new model of religious education that could produce scholars capable of engaging with contemporary realities. ALM Ibrahim, a prominent scholar-activist, echoed this view, asserting that traditionalist approaches lacked the intellectual depth and methodological tools needed to respond to the modern challenges facing Muslim society (Arafath, 2023, p. 64).

Global Influences

The education philosophy of NIIS was shaped not only by local Muslim thinkers and Islamic scholars but also by the ideas of prominent international Islamic scholars. According to Shukri, some of the critical works of Islamic scholars such as Sayyed Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi on the impact of secularism and materialism on the Muslim mind were translated into the local language. These works were widely read by Muslim community leaders in the 60s and 70s. As a result, these writings and ideas inspired Muslim community leaders to recognize the need for a new generation of Islamic thinkers who could better understand modern philosophies and their harmful effects on the Muslim mind. (Shukri, 1993, p. 53).

Personal interviews with founder members who are still alive revealed two important sources that guided the founder members to develop the idea of NIIS further. Firstly, founder members were influenced by the educational reform ideas of Egyptian thinker Mohamed Abdhu and Indian scholar Mohamed Ali. Both Abdu and Ali argued that Muslim religious education institutions needed to be reformed but presented modernist solutions to the problem (MHM Hibatullah, personal communication, June 12, 2023, & ARM Sulaiman, personal communication, June 30, 2023). They emphasized that Muslim religious education should incorporate natural and human sciences alongside religious education. In addition, the founding members of the NIIS were directly inspired by the Aleemiyyah Institute of Islamic Studies in Pakistan and its founder, Fazlur Rahman Ansari. The founder members highlight that although they determined to form a new institution that would offer a curriculum combining Islamic science and human sciences, they couldn't find a model to emulate in Sri Lanka. As a result, they travelled to Pakistan to explore potential integration models. During their trip, they met with various university rectors and Islamic thinkers, including Mowdudi, who all suggested

that the integration model the Sri Lankan community leaders were seeking did not exist in the Muslim world and that they would need to build their own model. Nonetheless, they identified the Aleemiyyah Institute of Islamic Studies in Pakistan as a potential model that could be replicated in Sri Lanka (Arafath, 2023, p. 64–65).

This institute, active in the 1960s and 70s, aimed to educate Islamic scholars with expertise in both Islamic studies and human sciences. Surviving founder members say that the structural design of the Alimiyyah institution gave them a clear framework for an Islamic religious education project that combing both religious science education and modern education. More than that, they highlight that the ideas of its director, Fazlur Rahman Ansari, greatly influenced their thoughts and perspectives of philosophical outlook and helped them to conceptualize the Naleemiah project. It is important to mention that Fazlur Rahman Ansari extensively wrote (2012) about the philosophy of unity and the negative impacts of the division of knowledge in modern universities on Muslim communities. He explained that Islam rejects the classification of knowledge into religious and secular categories. Instead, he stressed that all knowledge comes from one source: God. Moreover, he coined the term 'intergalactic civilization of Islam,' arguing that Islam is an exemplary model for future human civilization because it integrates both empirical and rational sources of knowledge and revelation into a single worldview (Ansari, 2017, p. 217). These ideas of Fazlur Rahman Ansari greatly influenced the vision of the founder members. Further evidence of Ansari's impact on the founder members was that they invited him to Sri Lanka again for more critical conversations (MHM Hibatullah, personal communication, June 12, 2023).

The formation of the NIIS illustrates a distinctive instance of how global and local dynamics interact in the transformation of ideas. In the post-independence period, Muslim socio-religious and educational leadership in Sri Lanka identified a critical gap in the prevailing model of religious education. They observed that traditional Islamic seminaries, while strong in transmitting religious knowledge, were largely disconnected from modern intellectual and scientific developments. This disconnection, they believed, hindered the ability of Muslim scholars to engage effectively with the challenges of a rapidly changing world. In response, these leaders turned to global reformist experiences within the broader Muslim world where similar concerns had given rise to innovative educational models. However, rather than merely replicating these models, the founders of NIIS adapted these ideas to the local context of Sri

Lanka, a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society with its own colonial legacy and socio-political challenges.

2.0 NIIS and Integration of Knowledge from the Perspective of Curriculum and Its Evolution

Another meaningful way to explore the relationship between the NIIS and the discourse on the integration of knowledge is to examine how this discourse has shaped the evolution of the Institute's curriculum over the past four decades. Accordingly, this section analyses the evolution of the NIIS curriculum by dividing it into four historical periods. Through this periodization, we can better understand how the integration of knowledge discourse evolved and how it concretely shaped curriculum practices, content, and pedagogical orientations at NIIS.

Negotiating Early Constraints: 1973-1984

During its first decade, the founders of the NIIS encountered two significant challenges in realizing their vision. First, they faced difficulties in creating a suitable curriculum because no comprehensive model existed elsewhere for the type of integrated Islamic and modern education they envisioned. Second, it was challenging to find qualified lecturers who understood and supported this innovative educational approach (Shukri, 1993). Due to these challenges, the initial curriculum did not represent a significant departure from traditional models; however, it demonstrated a desire to move in a new direction. A review of the curriculum from the early to mid-1970s reveals a hybrid structure. It incorporated subjects from the national education system alongside traditional Islamic studies. The founders believed that this combination would provide students with a basic understanding of both Islamic and modern sciences (MAM Mansoor, personal communication, September 5, 2019). The early curriculum consisted of two categories: Islamic subjects and modern subjects. Islamic studies included theology and jurisprudence, primarily taught using traditional seminary texts. The modern subjects were limited but included areas like agriculture, gemmology, and electronics, added to enhance students' employability and broaden their understanding of the contemporary world. Ayoob Ali, an early graduate who later taught at NIIS, noted that the curriculum and overall strategy during the early years were primarily shaped by traditionally trained *Ulamā* from different theological backgrounds (Ayoob Ali, personal communication, September 25, 2019). This was largely because the more formally educated founders, such as A.M.A. Azeez,

passed away shortly after the Institute's formation. Consequently, the responsibility for managing NIIS fell to the remaining Ulama and a few dedicated founders. However, many of them lacked the necessary skills and experience to fully realize the innovative goals of the NIIS project.

A Shift in Approach: 1984-1996

During the second stage of its development, spanning the years 1983 to 1996, the NIIS witnessed a significant shift in its curricular orientation. This period was marked by the recruitment of the Institute's own graduates as lecturers, beginning in 1983. This strategic move had a notable impact on the reform and evolution of the Islamic studies part of the curriculum. Unlike their predecessors, who were largely trained in traditional Islamic seminaries, the new cohort of lecturers had been shaped by the hybrid educational vision of NIIS itself. As such, they brought with them a more nuanced and reform-oriented understanding of Islamic education.

These newly appointed lecturers began to revise the Islamic studies component of the curriculum, introducing texts and readings that reflected contemporary trends and reformist Islamic thought. Notably, they incorporated works of modern Islamic thinkers who emphasized the compatibility of Islam with modernity, rational inquiry, and social reform. Subjects such as comparative jurisprudence *(fiqh muqāran)* were introduced or given greater emphasis. This marked a clear departure from the earlier reliance on traditional texts and approaches, and it indicated a broader shift in the intellectual trajectory of the institution (MAM Mansoor, personal communication, September 5, 2019).

It can therefore be argued that this second stage in the Institute's history was characterized by a more deliberate and structured attempt to reform and enrich the content of Islamic studies. The priority given to revising course texts and introducing reformist thought represented a significant step forward in realizing the original vision of the NIIS-an institution that aimed to bridge traditional Islamic scholarship and modern intellectual currents.

Collaboration with IIUI: 1996-2011

The NIIS undertook a significant curricular reform following the establishment of an academic collaboration with the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), Pakistan in 1996. During his visit to NIIS, IIUI's president Hussian Hamid al-Hassan offered postgraduate

educational opportunities at IIUI for NIIS graduates, contingent upon NIIS aligning its curriculum with IIUI's academic standards. This proposition marked a pivotal turning point in the development of structured Islamic studies programme of NIIS, prompting a comprehensive revision of its academic strategy and program architecture (Ushama & Fouz, 2023). In response, the NIIS undertook a structured overhaul of its curriculum and academic planning. The reform process focused on three interrelated domains: program structure, curriculum content, and institutional operational systems. Within the curriculum, Islamic Studies subjects were reorganized to correspond with IIUI's academic model, thereby adopting a more systematic and internationally oriented approach. In addition to core Islamic disciplines, NIIS integrated key subjects from the humanities and social sciences-such as sociology, philosophy, and comparative religion-into its curriculum. This interdisciplinary shift reflected a broader commitment to equipping students with both traditional Islamic knowledge and modern scholarly tools for critical engagement with contemporary issues. The revised academic framework also entailed improvements in administrative planning, student assessment, and academic coordination, aiming to elevate NIIS to the standards of an international Islamic institution of higher learning (Ushama & Fouz, 2023). This phase illustrates the dynamic interaction between global Islamic academic trends and localized institutional reform.

National Education Policies and Impact of IIUM: 2012 Onwards

This period of curriculum renewal was shaped by both domestic and global shifts in the socio-economic and political landscape, which compelled NIIS to respond proactively to evolving national educational expectations and labour market demands. Policy frameworks implemented by the Sri Lankan higher education sector required institutions to revise and realign their curricula to reflect national economic goals and employment strategies (NIIS Curriculum, 2020). NIIS wanted to respond to this demand while ensuring the continuity of its educational philosophy. In pursuing this goal, NIIS actively engaged with international models of Islamic higher education to draw insights and best practices for curriculum enhancement. A key source of inspiration during this phase was the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), particularly the curricular framework employed by its Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences. The emphasis at IIUM on harmonizing Islamic revealed knowledge with the human sciences resonated strongly with NIIS's long-standing commitment to educational synthesis and relevance (Haris, Personal Communication, September 20, 2019).

A close examination of the updated course plan helps us to better understand the Institute's direction. For instance, the most recent NIIS handbook (2020) outlines the institute's vision to be internationally recognized as a leading centre of excellence in higher education for *Islamic Studies, Human Sciences, and Technology* (p.05). Moreover, the stated learning outcomes of NIIS's degree programme, according to the handbook, also strongly stress the importance of integration of Islamic sciences with human sciences (NIIS handbook, 2020, p.33). In the field of Islamic studies, which is a fundamental part of NIIS, the handbook outlines that students will gain extensive knowledge of the core texts of Islam. They will also be able to demonstrate a broad understanding and utilize appropriate methods to critically analyse the foundational texts of Islam in their original Arabic form, including Quranic exegesis, prophetic traditions, as well as key areas of theology, law, and mysticism (NIIS handbook, 2020). In addition to the specific Islamic studies-related learning outcomes, the handbook also states that students will develop the ability to address real-world problems, gain knowledge in the field of political science, and acquire an overall understanding of sociology, social anthropology, and cultural analysis (NIIS handbook, 2020). The course structure provides deeper insights into the integration of different areas of knowledge. The updated version now includes more advanced subjects in Islamic studies and traditional Islamic sciences, such as the objectives of Islamic *Sharīʿah*, Islamic Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities, and Islamic Banking and Finance, among others (NIIS handbook, 2020). It also covers human sciences subjects like human resource management, social psychology, education, peace and social harmony, contemporary politics, and the study of Sri Lankan society (NIIS handbook, 2020).

3.0 Assessing the Impact of Integration of Knowledge Discourse at NIIS: Insights from Graduates' Perspective

This section draws on interviews with five selected NIIS graduates who have either completed or are currently pursuing postgraduate studies in Islamic studies and various human sciences, both locally and internationally. These interviews explored how the educational philosophy and curriculum of NIIS have shaped their approach to integrating Islamic and modern knowledge in their respective disciplines. The data also offer insights into potential areas for enhancing this integrative educational model.

Impact of NIIS's Education Philosophy: Encouraging Multidisciplinary

The interviews revealed a shared conviction among participants that the NIIS educational experience has significantly influenced their understanding of how to approach Islam and contemporary knowledge debate. Rather than relying on a singular disciplinary method, graduates recognized the importance of drawing from multiple fields to develop comprehensive solutions from an Islamic perspective. One graduate pointed out that the curriculum offered valuable exposure to core themes and debates in the social sciences, effectively complementing their study of Islamic disciplines and broadening their intellectual horizons (Respondent 02, Personal Communication, July 14, 2024).

Another interviewee emphasized that the structural design of NIIS's academic programme reflects an integrated knowledge framework. This, they explained, was a major factor influencing graduates to pursue further studies at universities that embody similar principles, such as the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), which promotes a holistic educational vision (Respondent 03, Personal Communication, July 25, 2024).

Another respondent elaborated on how the NIIS philosophy challenged the notion of rigid disciplinary boundaries. For him, the curriculum instilled an appreciation for viewing knowledge as interconnected and encouraged critical engagement with the epistemological foundations of modern social sciences from an Islamic intellectual perspective (Respondent 04, Personal Communication, July 26, 2024).

Furthermore, multiple interviewees observed that even core Islamic studies subjects at NIIS are taught with attention to real-world relevance. Contemporary social and political issues are regularly incorporated into classroom discussions, which necessitate familiarity with modern societal dynamics. In response, instructors integrate introductory concepts from the humanities and social sciences into their teaching of Islamic subjects. This pedagogical strategy supports the development of an integrative outlook even within the religious studies framework itself (Respondent 01, Personal Communication, July 16, 2024).

Limits of Knowledge Integration at NIIS: Missing Conceptual Coherence

A major concern raised by several graduates was the absence of a well-defined conceptual model for the IOK within the institution. Although NIIS promotes the idea of integrating Islamic and modern disciplines, the interviewees noted that this vision remains largely implicit

and underdeveloped in its academic framework. They emphasized that without a coherent theoretical foundation or clearly articulated methodology for integration, the institution struggles to translate its integrative ethos into a systematic and effective educational practice. This, they argued, represents one of the most significant limitations of NIIS's current approach. One respondent stated:

> We studied human sciences courses along with Islamic studies at NIIS. However, we learned those subjects without a proper conceptual background. We were not clearly informed of why we studied those human sciences along with Islamic courses. I heard that very recently NIIS has taken some serious steps in developing a conceptual outlook for their courses by introducing subjects like Islamic world view. (Respondent 01, personal communication, July 16, 2024).

Despite the inclusion of human sciences courses in the NIIS curriculum, interview data suggests that the institution has not effectively addressed how these disciplines are to be meaningfully connected with Islamic studies. As a result, students often perceive the social sciences as supplementary or even irrelevant to their core academic formation. One interviewee explicitly noted:

> NIIS merely introduces some social sciences subjects but doesn't effectively work towards integrating Islamic and social sciences. Although we study social sciences, we are not trained to evaluate how what we learn in these subjects impacts our understanding of Islamic themes. If we learn human science along with Islamic studies, we should be given a clear idea about how it helps us to understand our core subjects. There is no substantial discussion about it. In that sense, NIIS lags far behind in attempts to truly integrate knowledge debates. I believe NIIS needs to have a thorough conversation on this aspect. (Respondent 02, personal communication, July 14, 2024)

Suggestions for the Improvement: More Awareness, Training and Collaboration

The interviewees also highlighted aspects that need to be addressed for further improvement of the curriculum and delivery in terms of harmonization of Islamic studies and human sciences. In that regard, one respondent stressed the pressing need for NIIS to revisit and update its curriculum regularly to keep pace with evolving global academic debates in both Islamic studies

and the human sciences. He stated that integrating *more new courses in the social sciences and humanities* with greater academic weight would elevate their relevance within the broader educational framework. Moreover, the respondent underscored the importance of involving subject specialists, rather than relying solely on Islamic studies lecturers, to deliver these human sciences courses effectively. To strengthen the integration model, he recommended fostering institutional collaborations with universities pursuing similar interdisciplinary approaches. Such partnerships, he suggested, would enable valuable exchanges of experience and pedagogical methods. He also called for seminars and training programs to help students develop the skills necessary to approach contemporary social issues from a multidisciplinary perspective (Respondent 01, personal communication, July 16, 2024). Another responded shared the similar concern as follows:

> The lecturers, especially, need to be trained in this concept because they are the ones who bring this vision to the students. Therefore, NIIS's academic strategy should focus on equipping both students and staff with this framework. The human sciences courses need to be taught by experts, and NIIS must establish a collaborative network with these experts and plan how to integrate these subjects within the context of Islamic studies. (Respondent 05, personal communication, July 223, 2024)

One of the interviewees emphasized the importance of grounding students in the understanding that the integration of knowledge lies at the core of the Islamic intellectual tradition. He noted that classical Islamic scholarship was inherently interdisciplinary, with many renowned scholars being well-versed in multiple fields of knowledge. While acknowledging that replicating the achievements of past polymaths may not be feasible today, he stressed the need to foster an academic culture that reflects this integrative legacy. In his view, Islamic studies should not be taught in isolation from other branches of knowledge; rather, students must be continually exposed to frameworks that encourage meaningful engagement between Islamic thought and the wider human sciences. Such an environment, he argued, is essential to revitalize the holistic nature of Islamic scholarship in the modern context Respondent 02, personal communication, July 14, 2024).

Analytical Conclusion

The NIIS represents a significant yet underexplored experiment in integrating Islamic and modern knowledge within a Muslim-minority context. Its trajectory shaped by local reformers like A.M.A. Azeez and global influences such as Fazlur Rahman Ansari demonstrates a conscious effort to reconcile tradition with modernity. Despite its limited capacity and resources, NIIS has made a considerable impact in advancing the integration of knowledge discourse in Sri Lanka, producing hundreds of graduates who have obtained Islamic studies credentials alongside degrees in the human sciences. These graduates serve in diverse capacities across religious, educational, socio-political, and economic sectors, contributing meaningfully to the intellectual and professional life of the community. However, a critical assessment reveals persistent gaps between its aspirational goals and practical outcomes. NIIS was conceived as a response to the epistemic bifurcation caused by colonialism, aiming to produce scholars versed in both Islamic and secular disciplines. While its founders drew inspiration from reformist thinkers (e.g., Iqbal, Abduh) and institutions (e.g., IIUI, IIUM), the institute struggled to operationalize these ideas methodologically. Early curriculum (1973–1984) retained traditionalist leanings due to resource constraints, and subsequent reforms (1984–2011) relied on external models for inspiration. The curriculum evolved to include social sciences and professional disciplines, reflecting a commitment to integration. Operating in Sri Lanka's pluralistic, post-colonial milieu, NIIS faced unique pressures secular accreditation demands, resource scarcity, and community expectations that add more challenges and dimensions to its integrative vision.

The alumni acknowledged NIIS's role in fostering multidisciplinary thinking, with many pursuing advanced studies at institutions like IIUM. However, they critiqued the lack of structured frameworks to harmonize revelation-based and empirical knowledge, noting ad-hoc approaches to integration. Unlike the IOK movement, which articulated clear epistemic critiques, NIIS lacked a coherent theoretical foundation for integration. This ambiguity weakened its ability to innovate beyond curricular hybridity. For instance, while students studied *usul al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) or *Quranic* studies alongside sociology, few courses explicitly bridged their methodological divergences.

To elevate NIIS from a promising local initiative to a globally recognized model, the following three strategic steps are recommended:

Establish Strong Knowledge Partnerships and Collaboration

It is recommended that the NIIS, while maintaining its strong foundation in the core Islamic sciences such as theology, the *Qur'anic* and *Sunnah* Studies, and Islamic Jurisprudence-continue to advance its mission of integrating knowledge. Given the complex intellectual and socio-political challenges faced by contemporary Muslim societies, NIIS should actively foster dialogue between Islamic scholarship, modern disciplines, and global perspectives. To achieve this, the institute ought to innovate and experiment with new models and approaches for integration, supported by a vibrant culture of internal and external engagement. This includes organizing discussions, debates, and collaborative initiatives that bring together local and international scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim.

Reimagining Islamic Studies as a Multidisciplinary Specialization

The NIIS must rethink its paradigm of Islamic studies to move beyond the traditional conception of producing scholars solely focused on the core Islamic sciences. While retaining this foundation, the institute should broaden its mission to cultivate professionals such as Islamic educators, economists, sociologists, and historians, all grounded in an Islamic perspective. This requires systematic reimagining the curriculum to integrate Islamic teachings with relevant applied disciplines, fostering a multidisciplinary approach. Such a vision would enable NIIS to produce a vision capable of engaging both the religious and contemporary intellectual spheres, addressing complex challenges faced by Muslim communities in Sri Lanka and beyond.

Seek Global Institutions' Support and Recognition:

Global institutions such as IIIT and IIUM should develop structured initiatives to support Islamic educational institutions in Muslim minority contexts. This effort should include identifying potential partners across different regions and establishing collaborative programs that enhance academic quality, research, and curriculum development. Through such partnerships, institutions like the NIIS can gain greater exposure to global intellectual debates, pedagogical innovations, and best practices in integrating Islamic and modern knowledge. These initiatives would not only strengthen institutional capacity but also enable minority-context Islamic institutions to contribute meaningfully to international scholarly and policy discussions on Muslim education.

Finally, NIIS's journey underscores both the potential and pitfalls of integration in minority contexts. While its graduates exemplify the intellectual agility needed for such projects, the institute's unfinished trajectory calls for renewed vision. By addressing methodological and institutional gaps, NIIS could emerge as a model for minority Muslim communities navigating the tensions of modernity proving that integration is not merely an academic exercise but an imperative for sustainable intellectual and social renewal.

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Navigating Tradition and Innovation: Institutional and Cultural Determinants of Pedagogical Reform in Pakistani Madrasahs

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Abstract

The longstanding marginalization of religious graduates and the relative lack of socio-economic development in Pakistan are due to the enduring epistemological gap between the traditional Islamic seminaries (madrasahs) and the secular education of the present day. This dichotomy runs counter to *tawḥīdic* epistemology (TE), which holds that all knowledge is a whole derived from a single divine source. The attempts of reformism, often securitized, by the state have always proved to be unsuccessful since they impose a dualistic secular assimilation instead of real Islamisation of Knowledge (IOK). This practice has resulted in institutional dissonance and well-founded anxiety among traditional clergy about being secularized. This qualitative study, grounded in the original vision of TE and in Fazlur Rahman's theory of the organic unity of knowledge, explores the institutional and cultural realities of educational reform within the *Dars-e-Nizami* ecosystem. This research uses in-depth interviews and analysis of institutional documents using the constructivist pedagogical paradigm and is based on case studies of two innovative schools: Jamia-tur-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran. Findings reveal that the institutions avoid state-madrasah conflict in structural autonomy and assimilation of degrees. Importantly, they dismantle epistemological resistance through institutionalizing Project-Based Learning (PBL). The article claims that PBL is not an exotic secular incursion, but a modern rediscovery of the classical Islamic dialectical tradition and an effective means of Islamising knowledge. This change in pedagogy allows students to

synthesize in practice historical principles of jurisprudence with current socio-economic issues. This paradigm, based on self-initiative and research, ultimately proposes a scaffolded model of integration within the educational system, so that graduates of madrasahs can maintain unchallenged theological validity while still gaining the critical skills of the modern world.

Keywords: Madrasah reform, Project-Based Learning, Islamic epistemology, Fazlur Rahman, curriculum integration, *Dars-e-Nizami.*

Introduction

The epistemological divide of the Pakistani madrasah system can be adequately addressed with reference to the vision of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), which is deeply rooted in *tawḥīdic* epistemology and the Islamisation of Knowledge (TEIOK). The notion of TE is fundamentally opposed to the colonial and secular dichotomy of learning into *dini* (religious) and *dunyawi* (worldly) realms. Rather, it assumes that every true knowledge has a single divine source and must be sought in a unified, cohesive unity. In this paradigm, the IOK does not simply consist of the grafting of Islamic terms on the modern secular sciences in a superficial manner. Instead, it is a full-fledged epistemological and pedagogical reorganization, as advocated by the scholastic paradigm at IIUM, to bring modern sciences into conformity with Islam's ethical and spiritual worldview (Hashim & Ross 2000, 1921). Through this integrative vision, the traditional seminary can move beyond its defensive stance of text preservation to actively engage the intellectual world, thereby recovering its historical educational ecosystem, in which the transmitted sciences (*manqulat*) and rational sciences (*maqulat*) were explored as mutually supporting aspects of the same divine reality.

Embedded in this *tawḥīdic* paradigm, the implementation of PBL and constructivist pedagogies in the Jamia-tur-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran institutions is not only a means of modernizing methods, but also a highly effective and practical way to Islamise Knowledge. Constructivism, with its focus on active, contextual knowledge-building, aligns perfectly with the Islamic imperatives of *tafakkur* (reflection) and *tafaqquh* (deep comprehension). PBL will not make students passive receivers of unequal religious and secular knowledge. Instead, they are provoked to creatively integrate classical Islamic jurisprudence with contemporary socio-economic and technological realities. For example, the student must use both empirical research and classical Fiqh to design a project on the ethics of artificial intelligence or the Islamic finance of the day, so that a modern-day issue can be solved with a *tawḥīdic* worldview operationalized (AbuSulayman, 2007, p. 35-38). In this way, the use of constructivist modalities will enable Pakistani madrasahs to move towards integrating modern education in an indigenous Islamic way, generating scholars who can navigate the twenty-first century critically without losing their strong grounding in traditional Islamic epistemology.

This research is guided by the IIUM academic vision, as it empirically explores how TE can be applied to the unique traditional architecture of Jamia-tur-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran. The study transforms the IOK from theoretical abstraction into practical pedagogical change by

critically analyzing the institutional policies, cultural determinants, and classroom realities of PBL in these madrasahs. The essence of this research, the development of a culturally and epistemologically contextualized model of PBL, is directly related to the intellectual imperative of IIUM. It presents a solid, evidence-based system outlining how the Pakistani madrasah system can apply constructivist approaches to not secularize, but effectively reclaim the *tawḥīdic* synthesis of knowledge, thus empowering traditional graduates to respond to the present-day socio-economic challenges through an integrated, unified Islamic perspective.

The situation in the Pakistani educational landscape has been inherently marked by an overwhelming and sustained fragmentation, the state of which is often theorised in modern literature as educational apartheid. The core of this disrupted structure is the old-fashioned Islamic academy, or madrasah, a place that has traditionally been the primary centre of Islamic knowledge and scholastic education in the Indian subcontinent (Zaman, 1999). The madrasah used to be a total educational institution in which there was virtually no separation between religious and secular knowledge. A complex synthesis of transmitted sciences (*manqulat*), including the exegesis of the Qur'an and hadith, and the rational sciences (*maqulat*), including logic, philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy, the traditional curriculum was initially called the *Dars-e-Nizami* and was standardized in the eighteenth century by Mulla Nizamuddin Sihalvi (Moosa, 2015). Such a consolidated methodology provided that the graduates, in addition to being spiritual guides, were also becoming contributors to the administrative and intellectual backbone of the state.

Nevertheless, with the arrival of British imperialism, a drastic structural divide of knowledge was plunged. The most important interventions of the colonial policy, especially the minutes of 1835 and the Educational Despatch of 1854, introduced a parallel system of Western-style secular education and systematically pushed aside native knowledge systems (Tahir, 2022). Such an experience of colonialism generated a binary of ideas that disarmed madrasahs of their socio-political capital. As part of the response against the existential threat of colonial secularization, the ulama took a defensive position, reducing the purview of the *Dars-e-Nizami* to the preservation of the religious texts and identity almost exclusively. The attempt to shield the Islamic tradition in turn, according to Zaman (2002), brought about the creation of a strong demarcation between the realm of religion and the rest of the society, effectively terminating the natural evolution of Islamic pedagogy, and distancing the madrasah of the fast-modernizing world.

The aftermath of this epistemological discontinuity is still evident in the ongoing tension between the state and independent religious educational boards (*Wifaqs*) in post-colonial Pakistan. Various governments have tried to control and modernize the madrasah sector, starting with earlier efforts in the 1960s to the most recent introduction of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) which became the National Curriculum of Pakistan and the Societies Registration (Amendment) Act of 2024 (Sattar, 2024). Such interventions by the state constantly conceptualize reform in the context of national security and economic integration, which requires the addition of modern discipline subjects such as computer science, English, and social studies. However, these dictates often fail, weighed down by deep mistrust. Administrators in madrasahs are prone to thinking of state policies as neo-colonial moves to modernize their schools and weaken the Islamic spirit that gives them their base, and as a result, their curricular autonomy is fiercely defended (Tahir, 2022).

There is an increasing wave of opinion in progressive religious quarters, that internal educational reform is urgent and that it is time to bring a stop to this institutional opposition to state intervention. This crisis was radically diagnosed by Fazlur Rahman (1967), who concluded that the disunity of knowledge and the polarization of the lay and traditional types of education have put Muslim societies in the intellectual state of paralysis. He stressed that without incorporating this dichotomy into an organic whole, the Muslim mind will be unable to make original contributions to the modern world. The solution to this paralysis is to go beyond the limited inclusion of secular textbooks to the *Dars-e-Nizami*. It requires a pedagogical transformation between memorizing the material and thinking it over on the high level.

Hence, the necessity of the reform lies in the introduction of constructivist pedagogical models, including PBL, which can systematically guide contemporary approaches to the educational process toward the historic and inquiry-oriented ethos of Islamic epistemology. Through exploration of the institutional and cultural factors that either support or hinder this type of pedagogical innovations, this article seeks to justify how traditional Pakistani seminaries are grappling with the fragile routine of balancing, on the one hand, sustaining the purity of their heritage and on the other, negotiating the complexity of the twenty-first-century world.

This article argues that the most effective mechanisms for overcoming the enduring epistemological dichotomy in Pakistan's educational landscape are emerging from within the traditional seminary ecosystem itself, rather than through state-imposed assimilation. By

examining the organic integration of constructivist PBL, this study demonstrates how traditional institutions are reclaiming the *tawḥīdic* synthesis of knowledge while simultaneously navigating the complexities of the twenty-first century. To empirically ground this argument, the research employs a qualitative case study methodology, focusing on two pioneering institutions: Jamia-tur-Rashid in Karachi and Minhaj-ul-Quran in Lahore. These specific cases were selected for their distinct, autonomous approaches to curriculum integration and for establishing independent degree-awarding bodies. The article is structured to first outline a multidimensional theoretical framework rooted in Islamic epistemology and constructivist learning, followed by an analysis of the institutional and cultural determinants that historically resist pedagogical reform. It then transitions to a detailed comparative analysis of the institutional policies and classroom realities at Jamia-tur-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran, synthesizing these fieldwork findings to offer concrete policy interventions for bridging the madrasah-state divide.

Research Methodology

This study operationalizes a qualitative case study design, a framework particularly suited for analyzing complex educational ecologies where historical traditions and modern pedagogical demands intersect. The research investigates the institutional mechanisms and lived classroom realities of integrating project-based learning within the traditional *Dars-e-Nizami* ecosystem. To capture a comprehensive spectrum of grassroots educational reform, two institutions were selected as primary case studies: Jamia-tur-Rashid in Karachi and Minhaj-ul-Quran in Lahore. These institutions were purposively chosen because they represent distinct theological traditions yet share a common, proactive commitment to structural innovation, curriculum integration, and the establishment of autonomous higher education charters.

Data collection was conducted through a triangulated approach consisting of semi-structured interviews, direct classroom observations, and the critical analysis of institutional documents. In-depth interviews were held with a purposive sample of key stakeholders, including senior administrators, curriculum designers, and faculty members actively engaged in teaching both classical Islamic texts and modern disciplines at the selected institutions. These interviews were designed to extract nuanced perspectives on the friction between state policies, *Wifaq* regulations, and institutional autonomy, as well as the practical challenges of transitioning from the traditional *halaqah* method of transmission to a constructivist, inquiry-based model. Furthermore, institutional documents such as official policy statements, curriculum

frameworks from Majma ul-Uloom al-Islamiyyah, and project-based learning syllabi were collated to provide a textual baseline against which the lived pedagogical realities could be evaluated.

The qualitative data was subjected to a rigorous thematic analysis to ensure a high level of transparency and analytical depth. Following transcription, the data was inductively and deductively coded using a framework aligned with the study's theoretical pillars: TE, constructivist learning, and the sociological dynamics of religious authority. This coding framework facilitated the identification of core themes, including epistemological resistance, the preservation of *ijazah* culture, and the revival of classical dialectical methods through modern project-based pedagogies. By systematically linking the interview narratives and document analyses back to these theoretical constructs, the methodology ensures that the empirical findings robustly support the proposed model for culturally contextualized pedagogical reform within Pakistani madrasahs.

Theoretical Framework

To examine, in a systematic manner, the institutional and cultural factors of pedagogical change in Pakistani madrasahs, this article develops a multidimensional theoretical framework grounded in the vision of the IIUM: TEIOK. This general paradigm is united with the epistemological theories of the educational reform presented by Fazlur Rahman, constructivist pedagogical models, and the sociological theories of religious authority presented by Muhammad Qasim Zaman and Ebrahim Moosa (Rahman, 1982; Zaman, 2002; Moosa, 2015). The prism is so complicated because the *Dars-e-Nizami* ecosystem cannot be restructured pedagogically by simply performing an administrative overhaul of the curriculum but instead a radical epistemological repositioning and subtle social-political bargaining is needed.

This study uses TE as its guiding framework, which essentially rejects the colonial dichotomy in education between *dini* (religious) and *dunyawi* (secular) spheres. Through this vision, the IOK will be no longer seen as the surface level of imparting modern subjects into the traditional curriculum, but as a wholesome structural reorganization of the entire disciplines to be studied as one integrated divine reality (Hashim & Ross, 2000). It is in this general epistemological framework that Fazlur Rahman supports the organic unity of knowledge in its practical and institutional justification (Rahman, 1982).

To operationalize this integration, the framework uses constructivist learning theory and PBL. These approaches fit perfectly into the Islamic requirements of *tafakkur* (critical reflection) and *tafaqquh* (deep comprehension) and turn the theoretical basis of the IOK into practical realities in the classrooms of such institutions as Jamia-tur-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran. Lastly, to understand how such pedagogical and epistemological changes are negotiated within the old seminary, the framework draws on sociological perspectives on religious authority and tradition. Using Zaman and Moosa (Zaman, 2002; Moosa, 2015), the research demonstrates that the modernization of madrasah education is examined as a lived, multifaceted interaction in which the ulama must strike a delicate balance between safeguarding the sacred and adopting modern pedagogical modes.

Epistemological Synthesis: The Organic Unity of Knowledge

The first cornerstone of this system is based on the intellectual heritage of Fazlur Rahman who critically diagnosed the educational paralysis of the Muslim world as an effect of a serious epistemological dichotomy. Rahman (1982) suggested that due to the historic isolation between traditional Islamic sciences (*manqulat*), and the rational or secular sciences (*maqulat*), the traditional scholars were not well versed to deal with modern complexities. Such dichotomy, which was promoted by colonial disruption using such educational dispatch as 1854, left the traditional madrasah deprived of its dynamic contact with the empirical world and identified only with the preservation of the classical texts (Tahir, 2022; Malik, 1999).

Rahman (1967) argued that the survival, as well as relevance of Islamic education, involved the organic integration of all knowledge, and the secularization of the sacred and the sacred. This integration is justified methodologically by his theory of hermeneutics, which posits a double movement requiring Muslims to extract underlying moral principles from historical texts and apply them innovatively to address current socio-economic realities (Rahman, 1982; Abbas, 2017). Moreover, the paradigm as is expressed by al-Faruqi (1982) and al-Attas (1979) confirms this argument by stating that modern sciences should be critically evaluated and integrated into an Islamic knowledge epistemology instead of being readily embraced.

In this article, the idea of the organic unity of knowledge introduced by Rahman is solidly placed in the context of the wider paradigm of TE, which is the theoretical framework with which to evaluate whether the contemporary subjects and project-based pedagogies currently

propagated in madrasahs are a true, structural progress toward the IOK, or are just superficial, compartmentalized appendages.

Constructivist Pedagogy as a Continuation of Classical Tradition

The second framework pillar establishes the modern constructivist learning theory, i.e., PBL, in the historical spectrum of Islamic pedagogy. Constructivism assumes that learners can actively construct meaning from experience and engagement, rather than being passive recipients of transmitted facts. Although to many critics, the modern-day madrasah resembles an arena of rote memorization with no critical thinking (Nayyar, 1998; Hoodbhoy & Nayyar, 1985), a more historical examination of the history of the madrasah would unveil that classical Islamic education was constructivist in nature.

Previously, both the *halaqah* (learning circle) and *munazara* (scholarly disputation) involved students engaging in dialectical argumentation, critiquing jurisprudential literature, and applying legal maxims to new situations (Moosa, 2015). Halstead (2004) suggests that the goal of Islamic education is the holistic growth of the rational, spiritual and social faculties of the individual, and that one will serve as a *khalifah* (vicegerent) and this role is basically anchored in TE. Through this integrated world-vision, PBL, involving collaborative research, critical thinking, and practical problem-solving, would not be a foreign Western importation but rather a contemporary formalization of the dialectical traditions of the classical madrasah. According to this paradigm, the introduction of such innovations like PBL is to be introduced as some kind of renewal of the indigenous tradition of rationalism. In this way, PBL can serve as an active pedagogical instrument in the IOK, enabling the *ulama* to embrace reform in a more culturally and intellectually harmonious way, as a continuation of divine ethics and modern problem-solving (Moosa, 2015).

Institutional Autonomy and the Preservation of Religious Authority

The third pillar of this basis is the sociological examination of the relations between madrasahs and the state, and of the maintenance of clerical power. Zaman (1999, 2002) extensively records the role of the *ulama* as agents of change, arguing for their role in the contemporary public space. The conservative clergy sees the madrasah not as a school, but as the final bastion of Islamic identity in the face of the secular modern and the hegemony of the state (Sikand, 2005).

As a result, state-driven reforms, e.g. the Madrasah Reform Project (MRP) of 2002 or a Single National Curriculum, are often received with virulent opposition. This may be resistance not necessarily because of theological antagonism to modern knowledge, but because of deep lack of confidence. Madrasah administrators view interventions by the government as politically inclined efforts to monitor, control and eventually secularize their schools (Bano, 2007) and (Bashir & Ul-Haq, 2019). The conservative institutional independence of the ulama is strongly defended, and they use the centralized authority of the *Wifaqs* (madrasah boards) to oppose policies that could challenge their prerogative to establish Islamic orthodoxy (Sajjad, 2013; Andrabi et al., 2006). Thus, this framework posits that pedagogical change cannot be imposed from the top down by the state; it must be internal to the madrasah system of thought, spearheaded by religious thinkers with unquestioned theological authority.

Application of the Theoretical Framework

The three-component framework will be used systematically to analyze the institutional and cultural influences behind pedagogical change and ultimately compare these madrasahs with the vision of the academic of the IIUM. To begin with, the theory of epistemological integration proposed by Rahman, which is deeply rooted in the foundational philosophy of TE of IIUM, will be applied to critically evaluate curriculum restructuring at Jamia-tur-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran. We shall examine whether their integration of the sciences of today is successful in producing a real IOK to form an organic unity of all sciences or whether they continue to be caught in a dualistic system of education.

Second, the classroom pedagogical changes will be analyzed using constructivist learning theory as the analytical framework. Through analyzing primary information on the interaction between teachers and students with PBL and current research techniques, the article shall show how these learning institutions are moving away the passive transmission (rote memorization) to the active and high-level cognitive engagement. In this context, PBL is appraised as an effective operationalization of the IOK a revival of the classical Islamic form of dialectic, rather than a secular imposition.

Lastly, the sociological interpretations of religious authority and state-madrasah friction, as postulated by Zaman (1999, 2002) and Bano (2007), will be used to interpret the administrative strategies of Jamia-tur-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran. This element will solve the puzzle of how these institutions manage historical distrust and maintain institutional autonomy to culturally

authorize contemporary pedagogical innovations in the perceptions of the wider traditionalist community. Finally, this systematic approach will ensure that the empirical evidence is not only outlined but also critically evaluated against existing scholarly theories and against the extent to which these grassroots reforms will fulfil IIUM's overall vision of a harmonious, *tawḥīdic* educational environment.

The synthesis of these views entails the following table, which is the summary of the tripartite theoretical framework adopted in this study:

Table 1: Summary of Theoretical Framework

THEORETICAL PILLAR	KEY THEORISTS	CORE CONCEPTS	APPLICATION IN THIS STUDY
Epistemological Synthesis	Fazlur Rahman, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas	Organic unity of knowledge; Double movement theory; IOK	Evaluating whether the inclusion of modern subjects achieves true epistemological integration rather than superficial addition
Constructivist Pedagogy	Ebrahim Moosa, J. Mark Halstead	Active knowledge construction; Problem-solving; Revival of classical *halaqah* and *munazara*	Assessing PBL as an authentic continuation of the traditional Islamic dialectical method
Institutional Autonomy	Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Masooda Bano	Custodians of change; State-madrasah trust deficit; Preservation of religious authority	Analyzing how institutions legitimize pedagogical innovations autonomously to bypass state friction and preserve orthodoxy

Institutional Determinants of Pedagogical Reform: State Friction, *Wifaq* Regulations, And Institutional Autonomy

The structural evolution of the Pakistani madrasah system is deeply engaged with the political economy of the state, and the strongly held status quo of the religious clergy. Attempting to understand the barriers to pedagogical innovation and the implementation of PBL in modern sciences necessitates a study of the institutional resources that underpin these seminaries. The absence of trust, suspicion, and ideological conflict over the ultimate purpose of education characterizes the relationship between the madrasah establishment and the state.

Over the decades, multiple governments in Pakistan have attempted to regulate the madrasah sector by several policy interventions starting with the MRP of 2002, up to the more recent adoption of the Single National Curriculum (since the National Curriculum of Pakistan) and the Societies Registration (Amendment) Act of 2024. The most fundamental aim of these state initiatives has been to integrate religious seminaries by inserting secular subjects, such as English, mathematics, and computer science, into the current curriculum, which would then be under federal control (Sajjad, 2013; Tahir, 2022). Nonetheless, such top-down policy interventions are always unsuccessful. According to Bashir and Ul-Haq (2019), the root of this failure lies in the deep-seated distrust between the two toward financial regulation and curriculum control and degree recognition.

Administrators of Madrasahs perceive reforms imposed by the state not as a way of making real educational gains, but rather as a politicized programme of securitization, surveillance and, eventually, secularization. This perception is reinforced by the fact that government policies tend to be grounded in a national security paradigm rather than an educational one (Ahmad, 2025). The *ulama* in turn view state interference as a direct attack on their epistemological sovereignty as well as their historical role of protectors of Islamic orthodoxy. Considered considering the philosophy underlying the IIUM, this opposition is not merely reactionary; it is a defence of TE. The *ulama* instinctively object to the state policy because it imposes a colonial divide in knowledge, depicting modern sciences as entirely secular (*dunyawi*) additions rather than seeking them as an inseparable part of a single, divine reality. Zaman (2002) highlights that to protect this Islamic tradition, the *ulama* have provided concrete boundaries between the religious sphere and other aspects of the society, citing institutional independence as the main defence against secular modernity.

This institutional resistance is very functionalized and structured by the *Wifaqs*, the main religious education boards who run the madrasahs on sectarian grounds. The Wifaq ul Madaris Al-Arabia and other federations of the Ittehad Tanzimat-e-Madras Al-Pakistan (ITMP) have absolute control over the curriculum, syllabi, and examination system. Bano (2007) cites the centralized leadership of these *Wifaqs* as a reason governments have not reformed madrasahs, even though these *Wifaqs* have strong internal patronage and enjoy a degree of social legitimacy unavailable to the state. According to the *Wifaqs*, the limits of the acceptable knowledge are set, with the classical *Dars-e-Nizami* becoming the indisputable heart of the system. The state is, therefore, at structural and pedagogic crossroads in presenting such structures as the Single National Curriculum. Since these frameworks are a dualistic, secular supplement rather than an actual IOK, the boards feel that the imposition of modern textbooks constitutes a loss of their holy curriculum (Tahir, 2022; Sattar, 2024).

Moreover, new legislative interventions, such as Societies Registration (Amendment) Act of 2024, are aimed at imposing financial auditing, formal registration with the Directorate General of Religious Education or the Ministry of Industries (Ahmad, 2025). Even though these requirements are allegedly intended to promote administrative transparency and provide graduates with greater economic opportunities, they face immense opposition. The leadership of Madrasahs is afraid that economic dependence or subordination to state agencies will inevitably compel ideological concessions, as they claim that an institution whose curriculum and funding are determined by the state cannot easily criticize the socio-political order.

Therefore, the institutional factor that predominantly determines pedagogical reform is the demand on sovereignty. Experience shows that so long as educational modernization is linked to state-managed secularization, it will face uncompromising opposition from traditional boards. To avoid such a state-madrasah friction, the pedagogical reforms should be internally motivated and philosophically supported by the vision of TE of IIUM. By framing the incorporation of constructivist approaches and modern sciences as a true IOK rather than a compromise with the state, madrasahs will be able to modernize their classrooms without compromising their institutional and theological independence.

Cultural Determinants and the Preservation of Tradition

Although the institutional friction with the state is major challenge to pedagogical reform, in-house cultural and epistemological interactions of the madrasah ecosystem are no less of a

challenge. The classical seminary is not just a school; it is a holistic socio-cultural haven that is meant to maintain Islamic orthodoxy and develop a particular form of religious power. To comprehend the opposition to contemporary pedagogical models such as constructivism and PBL, one must critically analyze the epistemological fears of the conservative clergy, the pedagogical significance of the *ijazah* culture, and the institutional realities of teacher readiness.

Epistemological Resistance and the Fear of Secularization

The reluctance of the old ulama to go all the way and adopt contemporary educational methodologies cannot be attributed to intellectual backwardness or sheer resistance. Instead, it is a calculated defence mechanism as Zaman (2002) puts it, to conserve the sanctity of the Islamic epistemology. The *ulama* act as the self-appointed custodians of change, and they are all too conscious of the ontological and epistemological presuppositions inherent in the blind acceptance of the modern, western-infused sciences, as being incompatible with the Islamic worldview.

Modern sciences are not neutral in their values as extensively argued by al-Attas (1979) and al-Faruqi (1982) in their arguments against secular education, they are usually based on a secular, materialistic worldview that excludes divine revelation as the objective truth. In the case of the traditional madrasah administrator, introducing modern subjects without a strong procedure of would pose a danger to expose the students to a dualistic cognitive dissonance. According to Tahir (2022), this fear has deep roots in the colonial experience, as the claim of introducing secular education was openly applied as a weapon to destroy the right of the native Islamic power. The development of the modern pedagogy resistance into cultural resistance is, therefore, inherently an epistemological resistance. The *ulama* are terrified of the possible unintended effect of deconstructing sacred theological boundaries and secularizing the mind of the student as the result of engaging in constructivist methods that allow students to challenge the established norms and create their respective subjective realities (Moosa, 2015).

The *Ijazah* Culture and Pedagogical Stagnation

This epistemological warning is structurally supported by the conventional means of imparting knowledge in the *Dars-e-Nizami*: the first, the *halaqah* (learning circle), and the second, the *ijazah* (certification) system. The *ijazah* was earlier on a very dynamic system of peer review and academic validation whereby a student had not just memorized a text but had also mastered

the conceptual nuances of the text through dialectical interaction with a master teacher (Moosa, 2015). In its classical form, this system had strong constructivist features, with students expected to engage in *munazara* (disputation) and to reason by law to new cases.

The *ijazah* culture has however become hardened in the modern Pakistani milieu to a formal structure of propagation. Rahman (1982) noted that the conventional system of education shifted its orientation from generating original thinking to the keen preservation of past commentaries and super commentaries. The exalted role of the *mudharis* (teacher) as the ultimate provider of authoritative knowledge establishes a submissive classroom relationship that leaves the student agency in less than desirable condition. Within this context, the constructivist paradigm, which mandates that the teacher assume a supportive role in student-initiated enquiry rather than being the primary source of knowledge, is frequently seen as both a constituent of *adab* (traditional respect) and a challenge to the teacher's religious authority. A shift in the current model of rote-memorization to PBL framework, however, presupposes an enormous cultural shift, which would demand the ulama to replace the model proposed by Moosa (2015) of a republic of piety with a republic of letters.

Teacher Preparedness and Structural Limitations

Aside from philosophical and cultural opposition, the most practical impediment to pedagogical change is the lack of preparation among teachers. It means that it is necessary to integrate the modern pedagogical innovations not only with the faculty that is thoroughly versed in the Islamic sciences but also with the faculty who possess the skills of contemporary instructional design, curriculum mapping, and educational psychology.

Recent empirical studies evaluating the obstacles to current education in Pakistani madrasahs identify a dire lack of pedagogical training among traditional schoolteachers. Iqbal et al. (2023) found that although madrasah educators have a deep commitment to their religious cause, almost all have never undergone formal pedagogical training, including Bloom's Taxonomy or constructivist pedagogical interventions. The classical *mudarris* adheres to the pedagogical techniques by which he was taught in his own early years, the chief of them the line-by-line reading and translation of the ancient Arabic and Persian books.

In the case of state directives or reformist teachers trying to implement new subjects or research-grounded practices, such teachers do not have the necessary capacity to incorporate it substantially. As a result, modern topics are frequently presented through same rote-

memorization methods that are used to learning classical grammar, and they have been entirely deprived of their analysis (Bashir and Ul-Haq, 2019). Moreover, most madrasahs' financial resources are insufficient to employ experts or invest in the lifelong learning of existing teaching staff to transform them into professionals (Iqbal et al., 2023).

Thus, any model of educational integration which can be successful, must start with the issue of teacher capability. Without altering the intellectual orientation of the educator, it is pointless to change the syllabus as highlighted by Rahman (1982).

Overcoming Impasses: Institutional Case Studies

Case Study 1: Jamia-Tul-Rashid - Autonomous Expansion and Structural Innovation

Jamia-tul-Rashid in Karachi exemplifies a paradigm shift in how the traditional seminaries in Pakistan overcome the structural and cultural dead end of education reform. Jamia-tul-Rashid noticed the historical lack of trust in the regulatory bodies of the state and the precises of the traditional madrasah boards, and this is where a policy of volcanoes escaped expansion was chosen intentionally. Instead of being reactionary to modernization or just accepting the state-imposed curricular, the educational institution actively designed its own educational models to produce the epistemological synthesis proposed by such scholars as Rahman (1982).

Structural Reform: Majma Ul-Uloom Al-Islamiyyah and Al-Ghazali University

The greatest structural change in Jamia-tul-Rashid is the creation of its own educational board, Majma ul-Uloom al-Islamiyyah. As per its original policy statements, this board was specially meant to reconcile the traditional *Dars-e-Nizami* curriculum with modern requirements without undermining the fundamental Islamic epistemology. The curriculum requires such subjects as Islamic history, the modern global affairs, modern languages, astronomy and computer science in addition to classical jurisprudence and theology. This will effectively circumvent the friction between the state and madrasah system since education modernization will be internally standardized under the oversight of proven religious leaders, and as such become immediately acceptable to the traditionalist population.

In addition, to address the socio-economic exclusion of madrasah students, the school led the establishment of Al-Ghazali University and the *Kulliyyah-ush-Shariah*. These institutions provide formal degrees that are recognized by Higher Education Commission such as a Bachelor of Science in Islamic Banking and Finance, which are smoothly integrated with

advanced Islamic studies. Such a dual degree mechanism will solve the longstanding separation of secular and religious studies whereby graduates have the spiritual authority of the *ulama* but lack the professional qualification to engage in the contemporary global economy.

Pedagogical Shifts: Faculty and Management Perspectives

To move away the rote memorization and into the constructivist style of learning, deep-level pedagogical re-engineering is needed. The management interviewed at Jamia-tul-Rashid demonstrates that the integration of the curriculum is focused on a very calculated approach. Describing the systematic reform of the *Dars-e-Nizami*, Inaamullah Bhakarwi described the way in which the institution adjusted the traditional subjects to the modern education systems:

> We divided up the total by discipline. Thereafter, we determined the learning outcomes by the Bloom's taxonomy. Now, we have had eight years of this. We would like to see that a portion of what we have done on this is done in a yearly basis. How much then shall we learn of the rest of it? This is the extent of his knowledge that hought to possess. (Inaamullah Bhakarwi, Personal Communication, September 24, 2025)

Members of the faculty are recognizing the shortcomings of conventional teaching approaches and actively promoting active pedagogical interaction. Focusing on the shift in the direction of student-centered education, Nafees ul Haq Saqib mentioned that traditional texts are nowadays taught in a collaborative way:

> It is more advantageous to practically involve children and offer them more. Thus, such activities can be numerous. Different competitions can also be organized. So, at that, we arranged a contest in our class about the book of the prophet, Seerat Rahi Makhtum. We gave the students the book and instructed them to read it. At that point we created teams of four or five and made them compete against each other. (Nafees Ul Haq, Personal Communication September 24, 2025)

Institutionalizing Constructivism: PBL in *Dars-E-Nizami*

The highest expression of constructivist pedagogy at Jamia-tul-Rashid is the institutionalization of PBL as applied in the last year of the study, the Daura-e-Hadith. To decrease the distance between the classical literature and modern socio-economic realities, the

administration requires detailed and collective research works. This project targets the cultural obstacle of epistemological stagnation by compelling students to use classical Islam concepts on real-world issues in the present day.

The revolution of this constructivist method is supported by students' narratives. A final year student, Faizullah, emphasized the explanation of theoretical ideas about the Islamic commercial law by real-world experience:

> The approach of religious education which is grounded on practical activities is immensely helpful to have an easy grasp of the religious education. An example of these visits is seen in Jamia where visits to various institutions are made. The book on Islamic and modern economics is taught in the seventh grade. This is followed by a visit to the T-Bank and Stock Exchange to explain it in a practical manner. In the same way, tours with various companies are organized, as well. (Faizullah, Personal Communication September 25, 2025)

In addressing the issue of cultural fear of secularization, Jamia-tul-Rashid manages to enhance the sacred space of the *Dars-e-Nizami* because of the practical and researched activities. The institution shows that contemporary pedagogical tools, such as PBL, do not undermine the Islamic tradition; on the contrary, they are very effective for operationalizing the historical, rationalistic ethos of Islamic epistemology in the twenty-first century.

Case Study 2: Minhaj-Ul-Quran - Degree Integration and Research-Driven Pedagogy

Whereas Jamia-tul-Rashid has avoided state friction by independently developing its own educational boards and university charters, Minhaj-ul-Quran in Lahore has been very much institutionalized. The Minhaj-ul-Quran has also operationalized the epistemological synthesis of Fazlur Rahman by systematically institutionalizing the traditional *Dars-e-Nizami* curriculum as part of the Higher Education Commission accredited degree programs of Minhaj University Lahore. This model does not just juxtapose secular and religious studies; it seeks to create a practical merger of complementary studies, allowing students to take parallel courses, with the ultimate degrees granted in both traditional Islamic sciences *(Shahadat-ul-Alamiya)* and modern university courses (BS, MPhil, and PhD).

Institutional Harmonization and Socio-Economic Mobility

This structural integration has been facilitated by the historical isolation of the madrasah, which has grossly limited the socio-economic mobility of its graduates. Although clerical as a route to the spiritual world, is traditionally important, graduates of such a route are not usually best prepared to play their part in the wider socio-political and economical clockwork of the state. To correct this, Minhaj-ul-Quran has also stipulated simultaneous enrolment to universities.

The given policy is not just the administrative, but a deep psychological and institutional change that the old faculty needs to experience. One of the senior faculty members who taught Hadith and Literature, namely Mohammad Johar Ahmed Sheikhi, described how the library trains students and faculty to be ready to live in this combined reality and added that modern degrees were no longer optional but a requirement to be relevant to society:

> When we assimilate it in the mind, there might be ten, even new ones. We are also updating and upgrading. We have enhanced our courses and acquire new knowledge. It is all possible since we also have workshops where we learn and are taught new things. The student knows that in case he fails to take an MPhil, he cannot access any college in the modern day because a Bachelor of Arts requires a degree to get an access to college. Here, he realizes that it is his compulsion, hence he is receiving an opportunity. (Mohammad Johar Ahmed Sheikhi, Personal Communication September 16, 2025)

This integration is a direct response to the sociological crises developed by Zaman (1999, 2002) in his conquest of the peripheral power of the *ulama*. The institution provides students with modern degrees therefore it can guarantee that graduates will have access to formal employment opportunities. It is eloquently stated that this dual competency revives the social prestige and the power of influence of the religious scholars in the contemporary world of participation by Mohammad Mumtazul Hasan who is the Director of Jamia Islamia Minhaj-ul-Quran:

> Keep it with the other, and second, concentrate on the future, ancient or religious wisdom. And allow for real knowledge. This is the need of the hour. This gives confidence to the children. They do not rely on other people in the society. He can walk on his own feet and earn, and when any one is walking on his own feet and earning, when he speaks of religion, our society looks at what he says in a

> new light. His words have more impact. With increased acceptance, we will be able to comprehend what the time requires. (Mumtazul Ul Hassan, Personal Communication, September 19, 2025)

Epistemological Shift: From Rote Transmission to Constructivist Inquiry

Nevertheless, without a pedagogical change, it is not enough to structure a BS degree with the *Dars-e-Nizami*. The classic pedagogy of the madrasah which relied on the passive delivery of the text and memorizing by heart is simply incompatible with the research-based requirements of the advanced university education. This is addressed by Minhaj-ul-Quran switching its instructional design to constructivist paradigms, namely, PBL and independent research.

The professors of Minhaj-ul-Quran have a very critical understanding of the weaknesses of the classical approach of using *halaqah* to modern contexts. They understand that the intellectual potential of the youngsters is blocked using centuries-old forms of pedagogy. A severe criticism of the traditional model of transmission came with Sajid Mahmood Al Azhari, who taught *Fiqh and Usul-e-Fiqh,* and aggressively urged the need to engage students through projects to open their potential:

> The preparation you must make is to interest children in their subject, and how will that come? When you engage children and embrace PBL, the old approach of teaching, I am not depicting it in vague terms, is dead. It's a waste of time. Potential of children is being thrown away. On the one hand, we possess so many minds, children, young people, generations, they are talented. They have potential. This is a conventional method of teaching, and you are killing that potential. The fact that you do not give their minds a chance to open. You are holding them back 700 years. (Sajid Mahmoud, Personal Communication September 16, 2025)

To overcome this stasis, the College of *Sharia* and Islamic Sciences requires intensive research dissertations and practical works even in the undergraduate equivalent levels of the *Dars-e-Nizami*. This pedagogical change is supported by the creation of the Farid-e-Millat Research Institute as its infrastructure. The students will be expected to apply current research methodologies, electronic databases and comparative analytical systems to solve the current juristic and social problems that will bring them far beyond the simple memorization of classical glosses.

This incorporation of the stern and autonomous investigation required of the university into the sacred programme of the seminary causes Minhaj-ul-Quran to revive successfully the classical rationalistic tradition of Islam. This model demonstrates that the Pakistani madrasah can become more a dynamic knowledge factory rather than a museum of ancient writings, if the reform has Islamic epistemology as the foundation and the real champions of religion as its leaders.

Discussion: Synthesizing Tradition and Innovation Through Project-Based Learning

Experimental support is presented in the comparative analysis of Jamia-tul-Rashid versus Minhaj-ul-Quran that the systemic obstacles to madrasah reform i.e. state friction, epistemological resistance and pedagogical stagnation are not in any manner unbreakable. Rather than perceiving traditional Islamic education and contemporary constructivist pedagogy as mutually exclusive, both schools demonstrate that PBL can serve as an indispensable methodological bridge. With the internalization of the reform process, these institutions have operationalized Fazlur Rahman's vision of organic intellectual integration (Rahman, 1967, 1982).

Overcoming Institutional Friction Through Pedagogical Autonomy

Based on the formed opinion about the institutional factors, the most significant obstacle to pedagogical change is the deep mistrust between the state and the conservative clergy, in which the government interventions are seen as mostly an attempt to secularize Islamic education (Tahir, 2022; Bashir & Ul-Haq, 2019). Jamia-tur-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran evade this hurdle by purporting pedagogical autonomy. These institutions eliminate the risk of becoming intervened by the state by creating their own independent degree awarding institutions, i.e. Jamia-tur-Rashid in the case of Minhaj-ul-Quran, and Al-Ghazali University in the case of Jamia-tur-Rashid.

Most importantly, this structural independence allows the safe psychological and theological space necessary to realize the original vision of the IIUM. These madrasahs can base their reforms on TE by maintaining oversight of their educational systems and avoiding the secular-religious dichotomy in state policies. This cultural fear of secularization dissolves when educational standards that are modern are presented, not by state bureaucrats, but by religious scholars in power. Both institutions confirm in their management reports that the traditional community willingly incorporates contemporary pedagogies when they own the curriculum as

a real IOK. Such an epistemologically consistent methodology makes external, essentially dualistic state interventions, such as the Single National Curriculum, a thing of the past in these progressive centres.

PBL as the Revival of The Dialectical Tradition

The cultural barrier of pedagogical stagnation, often characterized by a strict adherence to rote memorization and a rigid *ijazah* culture, is directly confronted by the introduction of PBL. However, to ensure this constructivist approach is culturally accepted by the traditional clergy, both Jamia-tur-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran avoid framing it as a Western pedagogical import. Instead, it is applied implicitly and strategically as a renaissance of the classical Islamic rationalist tradition. This framing aligns perfectly with the foundational philosophy of the IIUM. Through the lens of IIUM's TE, PBL is not a foreign disruption but a vital mechanism for the IOK. It revives the Qur'anic mandate for active intellectual engagement (*tafakkur*), viewing the pursuit of knowledge as a unified, divine endeavours rather than the mere passive preservation of historical texts.

Traditionally, Islamic pedagogy flourished based on *munazara* (scholarly disputation) and critical inquiry (Moosa, 2015). Qualitative data from both case studies depicts a calculated reversal to this dynamic, *tawḥīdic* model of education. At Minhaj-ul-Quran, there is an overt renunciation of the centuries-old passive transmission paradigm in favour of project-based interaction (Sajid Mahmoud, Personal Communication, September 16, 2025), underscoring a wilful faculty initiative to release student potential. Equally, at Jamia-tur-Rashid, students are required to derive legal rulings directly from primary texts and apply them to modern fieldwork. For instance, by visiting the stock exchange to analyze corporate finance through the lens of Islamic jurisprudence (Faizullah, Personal Communication September 25, 2025), students transition from being passive recipients of historical glosses to active producers of contemporary Islamic knowledge. This exact synthesis of traditional religious ethics and modern empirical reality is the ultimate practical realization of IIUM's vision for the IOK, proving that traditional madrasahs can successfully operationalize TE to solve contemporary socioeconomic challenges.

Epistemological Synthesis in Practice

Finally, the latest and most important contribution of these institutional models is their practical application of Fazlur Rahman's theory of epistemological integration (Rahman, 1982). A

dualistic form of response to modernity has also been common in the traditional madrasah, a morning of *Dars-e-Nizami* followed by an afternoon of secular English or Math, without any intellectual integration of the two.

As practiced in such institutions, PBL breaks this dualism. The Jamia-tul-Rashid research projects, including Bin Aof E-commerce initiative and the Green Energy feasibility studies (Jamia-tul-Rashid, 2023a; 2023b) demand concurrent application of the modern market analysis and classical *Fiqh al-Muamalat* (Islamic commercial law). These projects cannot be accomplished solely by students using medieval texts; they need to utilize the ethical principles underlying the *Shariah* to address modern economic variables. This is how exactly the theory of the dual movement by Fazlur Rahman is operationalized. These establishments have made PBL a mandatory part of the *Dars-e-Nizami*, thus assuring that modern sciences are not simply accepted as supplementary to religion, but they are actively suppressed to and integrated with the epistemology of Islam.

As a result, this is the synthesis of a new type of religious scholar; that which still has the theological legitimacy of the traditional *ulama* (Zaman, 2002) but who has acquired the critical, problem-solving skill of the modern socio-economic environment.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The dichotomy of education which has also been a constant feature of Pakistan since colonial policy and worsened by the post-colonial policies of the state have continually marginalized the traditional madrasah system. This duality is contrary to the TE promoted by the IIUM, in which all knowledge is seen as a single, coherent whole originating from a single divine source. However, the empirical studies by Jamia-tur-Rashid and Minhaj-ul-Quran demonstrate that the structural and cultural barriers that prevent educational reform are not insurmountable. These schools have practically implemented the IOK vision of IIUM, namely the attainment of a natural synthesis of all subjects, through the pretence of institutional autonomy and the rediscovery of the classical Islamic culture of dialectical enquiry.

The fact that the *Dars-e-Nizami* system was able to incorporate constructivist paradigms, specifically PBL, proves that the high-order cognitive work and the contemporary social-economic problem-solving do not undermine the traditional Islamic epistemology. Rather, they are practical and classroom level operationalizations of the *tawḥīdic* worldview. To generalize these successful models and reduce the general educational gap in Pakistan, reform strategies

should be bottom-up, tuned to capture this epistemological synthesis. The policy implications of this study are evident in the policy recommendations it has made to independent religious boards and state policymakers, calling on them to abandon their dualistic educational policies in favour of true integration.

Recommendations For *Wifaq* Boards and Madrasah Leadership

To start with, the central religious educational boards (*Wifaqs*) should acknowledge that pedagogical stagnation is a more serious threat to the existence of Islamic tradition than modernization. The models of the Majma ul-Uloom al-Islamiyyah and the Minhaj-ul-Quran are not to be left a mere experiment; they need to be implemented in a systematic expansion to the general net of the madrasahs. The *Wifaqs* ought to establish centralized curriculum development committees to map traditional *Dars-e-Nizami* subjects to current learning taxonomies, so that students do not merely memorize information but can reason analytically.

Second, *Wifaq* needs to focus on institutionalized teacher training. As research on cultural determinants has shown, the absence of pedagogical abilities among traditional teachers is the main factor preventing constructivist reform (Iqbal et al., 2023). The boards are to impose mandatory programs of continuous professional development for the faculty of madrasahs, primarily in instructional design, research methods, and PBL. With these skills provided to teachers, Wifaq can ensure that the introduction of modern sciences is taught not passively but analytically.

Third, madrasah leadership should take the initiative to re-define the tale of modern education. Instead of considering disciplines like economics, political science and digital literacy as secular incursion, these subjects should be included in the school curriculum as mandatory conditions of modern *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning). The proposed epistemological reform will be based on the works of Rahman (1967, 1982) and al-Attas (1979) and will help to overcome the cultural fear of secularization and enable graduates to take an active leadership position in the public.

Recommendations For State Policymakers

The most crucial challenge towards the policy taken by the state policymakers is to drop the securitized, top-down method of madrasah regulation. As Bashir and Ul-Haq (2019) and Tahir (2022) have extensively described the concept of educational reform as counterterrorism

ensures that institutions resist it. The state should treat madrasahs as acceptable educational partners, not as security threats.

To begin with, the government needs to change its approach of dictating the contents of the curriculum like the imposition of the Single National Curriculum, which is inflexible and rigid, to creating pedagogical capacity. Unconditional technical assistance, access to the digital libraries and pedagogic training facilities should be provided by state educational ministries and Higher Education Commission (HEC) to madrasahs and the religious boards should be left to integrate these means independently.

Second, the state needs to be concerned with socio-economic marginalization of madrasah graduates by providing them with an adaptable avenue of degree equivalence and professional inclusion. The blueprint of this integration is found in the dual-degree models instituted by Al-Ghazali University and Minhaj University. HEC and other relevant state institutions must develop clear, transparent guidelines to identify autonomous madrasah boards that meet high standards of academic and research work, thereby enabling them to compete fairly in the country's job market.

Finally, the problem of successful educational reform in Pakistan is to substitute mutual suspicion with epistemological respect. The state and the ulama can contribute to the creation of a generation of scholars capable of maintaining the Islamic tradition and simultaneously working in the complex modern society by supporting internally motivated, constructivist innovations, such as PBL.

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Sharing Economy from Islamic Perspectives: A Bibliometric Analysis, Research Trends, and Research Agenda

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Abstract

The sharing economy, a model that fosters resource optimization, collaboration, and efficiency, represents a new frontier in economic models. However, its alignment and implications within the framework of Islamic principles and values have not been extensively explored. There exists a significant gap in understanding how the sharing economy can coexist with, and benefit from, Islamic contexts. This gap limits the development of economic systems that are both inclusive and adhere to Islamic values. This study seeks to explore the sharing economy from an Islamic perspective, aiming to fill this knowledge gap and offer insights into adapting it in ways that align with Islamic principles. This endeavour is, to the researchers' knowledge, a pioneering effort in conducting a comprehensive bibliometric analysis in the realm of the sharing economy. Thus, this study stands as a pivotal initial step towards developing robust frameworks that integrate the sharing economy with Islamic principles, paving the way for future research in this area.

Keywords: Sharing Economy; Islamic Perspective; Bibliometric Analysis, Future Research

JEL Codes: A1; O1; Z13

Introduction

The concept of the sharing economy is defined as the peer-to-peer distribution of access to underutilized assets and services. This model emphasizes the maximization of utilization and accessibility, rather than prioritizing ownership (Cheng, 2016). However, the concept of the sharing economy is not entirely a modern phenomenon. Its principles are deeply entrenched in history, with some aspects tracing back to early times, suggesting that the sharing economy's foundational concepts are as ancient as humanity itself (Belk, 2014).

The sharing economy has been experiencing rapid growth and gaining increasing attention in both practical applications and academic research, where its trend is anticipated to persist (Kumar et al., 2018). Projections by PwC indicate that SE could escalate global revenues from approximately $15 billion in 2015 to an estimated $335 billion by 2025 (PwC, 2015). The potential of the sharing economy to revolutionize various industries makes it a critical subject for research. The disruptive nature of the sharing economy poses challenges to existing market players while simultaneously opening doors for both new and established entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, the sharing economy underscores the concept of sustainability as a significant opportunity or challenge for these entrepreneurs and incumbent firms. This dual aspect of sustainability within the sharing economy is extensively discussed in various studies (Curtis and Lehner, 2019; Govindan et al., 2020; Liu & Chen, 2020; Pies et al., 2020), highlighting its importance and the need for further exploration in this domain. Apparently, the policymakers are increasingly aware of the dual impact of the sharing economy, where its potential to catalyse startup formation, wealth creation, and job generation, as well as its capacity to contribute to firm closures and job losses. Given these contrasting effects, there is a growing need for a robust evidence base. This evidence is crucial for determining the necessity and extent of interventions, whether regulatory or financial, to support firms operating within the sharing economy. Such an assessment is vital for ensuring that the sharing economy's growth is both sustainable and beneficial across the economic spectrum.

Recent technological advancements further have significantly transformed sharing practices, making them readily accessible to a wide audience at any time. This ease of access has been a key factor in enabling the exponential growth of these practices. The sharing economy, with its potential to disrupt various industries, represents an important area for research.

The sharing economy has attained significant prominence in practical applications, and concurrently, it has garnered considerable interest within the academic community. Researchers have increasingly focused on this field, recognizing its importance and potential for transformative impacts (Martin, 2016). This is evidenced by the growing body of studies and scholarly work dedicated to exploring various facets of the sharing economy (Ertz & Leblanc-Proulx, 2018). This trend underscores the expanding relevance and influence of the sharing economy both in practical domains and as a critical area of academic inquiry.

The rapid expansion of the sharing economy has been paralleled by an extensive increase in academic research on the subject, spanning a diverse range of disciplines. This surge in scholarly interest and output has been so significant that it has led numerous researchers to undertake comprehensive literature reviews on the sharing economy. These reviews aim to synthesize and analyse the extensive body of research, reflecting the growing interdisciplinary nature of studies in this area. This trend not only highlights the academic community's recognition of the sharing economy's importance but also underscores the need to understand its multifaceted implications and developments through rigorous scholarly examination.

The rapid increase in the number of publications focusing on the sharing economy has led to appeals for a comprehensive mapping of this expanding research field. There is a growing recognition of the need to systematically chart the contours of this area of study, which is rapidly evolving and expanding. Additionally, there is a specific call for identifying opportunities for further research, particularly in the context of the Islamic sharing economy. Although the sharing economy is a widely researched topic, based on the literature review, some clear research gaps can be highlighted in the sharing economy literature. Past research on sharing economy configurations is predominantly geared towards the profitability of various business model configurations, thereby sharing economy models that align with Islamic principles and values are missing. This specific focus acknowledges the unique aspects and potential of the sharing economy within Islamic contexts, highlighting an area that could benefit from increased scholarly attention and investigation. This initiative aims to deepen the understanding of the sharing economy's dynamics and its diverse applications across diverse cultural and economic systems.

Thus, to effectively respond to the need for a comprehensive understanding of the sharing economy, particularly in the context of the Islamic sharing economy, conducting a literature review is a widely recognized and valuable approach. Literature reviews serve as a crucial tool

in identifying key themes, discerning patterns, understanding processes, and analyzing outcomes relevant to a research field (Bodolica & Spraggon, 2018). Through systematic examination and synthesis of existing literature, researchers can gain a holistic view of the field, assess the current state of knowledge, and identify gaps that warrant further exploration. This process not only consolidates existing research but also provides a foundation for future studies and advancements in the field of Islamic economy. This article aims to offer a quantitative overview of studies pertaining to the sharing economy, along with a detailed map outlining the principal research trajectories currently being pursued in this domain. Furthermore, the article seeks to propose an agenda for future research in the field of Islamic sharing economy.

Research Methods

The bibliometric analysis offers valuable insights and significantly contributes to the understanding of literature specific to a particular field (Ellegaard, 2018). The method is employed across a wide range of research areas for diverse purposes (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). Bibliometric analysis helps in mapping the intellectual structure and dynamics of a research field via analysing a body of literature. It enables researchers to identify key trends, major contributors, and fundamental publications, as well as to trace the evolution of themes and ideas over time. This approach is particularly useful in fields experiencing rapid growth or change, such as the sharing economy, where it provides a structured and comprehensive overview of the existing research landscape.

In this study, we employed two bibliometric techniques to conduct our analysis: citation analysis and bibliographic coupling. Citation analysis, a prevalent method in such studies, involves the creation of lists and rankings to evaluate the impact and influence of various works in the field (Zupic & Cater, 2014). This technique provides insight into the most cited works and key contributors, helping to identify seminal and influential research within the field.

Additionally, we utilized bibliographic coupling, a method that forms networks and clusters based on the common references shared between documents. This technique, founded by Kessler (1963), who assesses the similarity between two studies based on the number of references they have in common. The greater the number of shared citations, the closer the relationship between the two documents is. Through bibliographic coupling, we can map the connections and thematic similarities between various studies, providing a clear understanding of the research landscape within the sharing economy field. This approach helps in uncovering

emerging trends, dominant themes, and potential areas for future research.

To facilitate this analysis, we conducted our search on one of the most extensive databases of scientific knowledge. Elsevier's Scopus stands as the largest database which including a wide range of peer-reviewed literature. This includes an extensive collection of abstracts and citations from scientific journals, books, and conference proceedings (Donthu et al., 2021). The comprehensive nature of Scopus makes it an ideal resource for conducting a thorough and wide-reaching bibliometric analysis. Its role as a repository of academic content allows for a detailed and inclusive examination of the literature in the field of the sharing economy, ensuring that the analysis captures a broad range of research contributions and trends in this area.

The data collection for this study was carried out in January 2024. The search strategy was meticulously designed to capture the scope of research related to the sharing economy. We employed specific search terms- "sharing economy" and "Islamic". These terms were strategically used to search within the article titles, abstracts, and keywords fields in the database.

In establishing the parameters for our data collection, we set the final year of publication as 2023, without specifying a start date to describe knowledge areas. This approach was adopted to ensure a comprehensive capture of the full spectrum of research in the field. Additionally, the search was conducted without restricting it to scientific articles. This decision was made to enable a more robust analysis of the volume and range of studies on the topic. Following the suggestion of Cheng (2016), we also included grey literature (i.e., reports, theses, and conference papers) in our search. By incorporating these sources, our analysis aimed to provide a more thorough and reliable overview of the research landscape surrounding the sharing economy. We have included in the initial search with these keywords TITLE-ABS KEY (sharing AND economy, AND Islamic). The initial search included 110 documents. Later, we searched only English-language articles and further reduced them to 104 for conducting a bibliometric analysis. The summary of the final sample is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the sample documents

Timespan	1996:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	78
Documents	104
Annual Growth Rate %	8.9
Document Average Age	6.67
Average citations per doc	6.99
References	4584
Keywords Plus (ID)	80
Author's Keywords (DE)	339
Authors	200
Authors of single-authored docs	34

Single-authored docs	36
Co-Authors per Doc	2.16
International co-authorships %	25
article	74
book	5
book chapter	12
conference paper	3
review	6

Notes: This table presents the summary of the sample documents analyzed in the study.

For the mapping and cluster analysis in our study, we utilized the bibliographic coupling technique. All relevant publications were imported into VosViewer software, a tool developed by Van Eck and Waltman (2010). This software is specifically designed for creating bibliometric maps and for its ability to graphically represent bibliometric data clearly and understandably. The choice of Vos Viewer was influenced by its emphasis on the visual representation of bibliometric networks, which facilitates an understanding of the relationships and patterns within the dataset.

The appropriateness of Vos Viewer in the context of sharing economy research is evidenced by its application in recent scholarly works. For instance, Sainaghi et al. (2020) employed this software in their systematic review within the sharing economy domain. Additionally, the methodology proposed by Ertz and Leblanc-Proulx (2019), which focuses on the collaborative economy, also leverages Vos Viewer. These precedents underscore Vos Viewer's utility in handling and visually articulating the nuances of bibliometric analyses, particularly in research areas as dynamic and interconnected as the sharing economy. Through this approach, our study aimed to generate a mapping that reveals existing relationships and intellectual structures within the sharing economy literature, providing valuable insights and directions for future research.

Result and discussion

In this section, we explained the bibliometric analysis data. It included an examination of the development of research within the domain of the sharing economy from Islamic perspectives over time, which focused on the primary keywords employed in these studies. Additionally, an overview of the key contributors to knowledge and the scope of studies conducted in this area will be carefully presented. The objective of these findings is to explain the range of knowledge generated in this research field to date. This is crucial for discussing and analyzing future directions, specifically in terms of research trends and the research agenda in subsequent sections of this article.

Progressive Development of Research Over Time

Figure 1 shows the total number of documents published per year about the sharing economy from Islamic perspectives from 1996 to 2023. The period 1996–2004 shows a relatively flat trend with only minor fluctuations. The number of documents remains low, which may indicate that these topics were not as dominant in academic discourse.

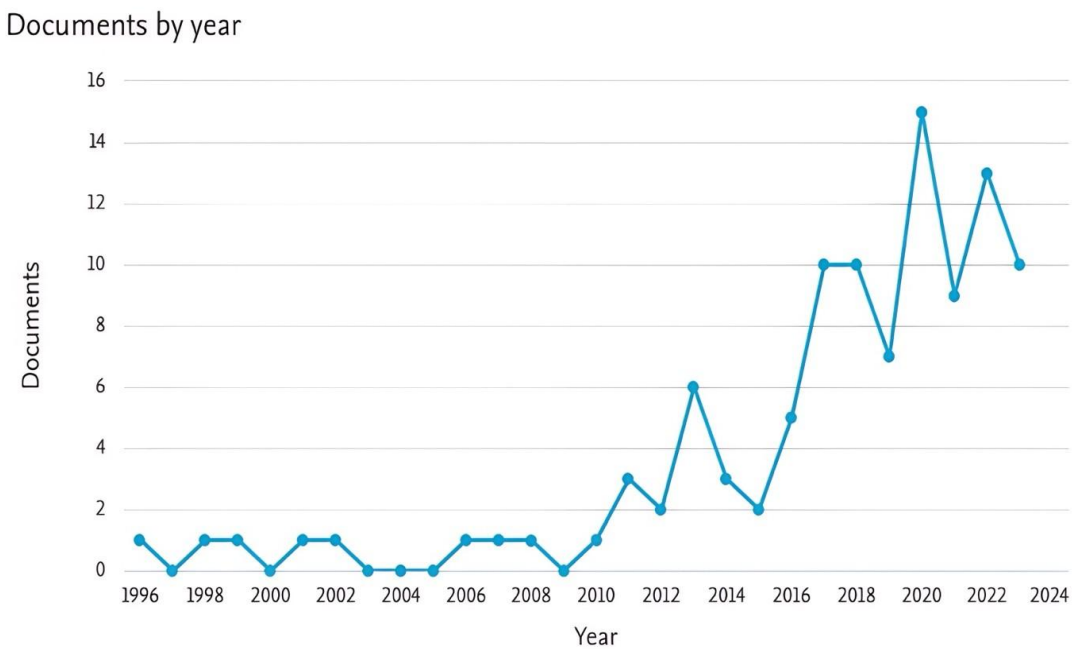
In 2005–2007, there was a gradual upward trend. This could suggest a growing interest or the emergence of the sharing economy as a subject of study within the context of Islamic principles. Furthermore, there is a notable peak in 2008, reflecting a response to a specific publication that produced interest among the researchers. Since this was around the time of the global monetary crisis, there might have been increased attention to alternative economic models and their ethical implications, including discussions around the sharing economy and the Islamic context. The number of documents declines slightly after the peak in 2008 but begins a steady climb

again. These increases occurred due to the popularity of the sharing economy as a research field for scholars during the past few years (Arcidiacono et al., 2018; Kumar et al., 2018).

This could be due to the gradual recovery of the global economy and the subsequent rise in the sharing economy, with more discussions on its compatibility with Islamic values. There is a sharp peak in 2013, indicating a significant surge in interest or research. This might correspond with the sharing economy becoming more attentive, and an increase in scholarly examination of its principles from an Islamic perspective. Post 2013, there is a sharp decline in documents. This could be due to market saturation, a shift in research focus, or other global trends that are affecting the production of such literature. The largest peak occurs around 2017, suggesting an extremely high level of interest and publication. This might be due to the maturation of the sharing economy and significant developments in Islamic finance, or key conferences or publications that encouraged scholarly work.

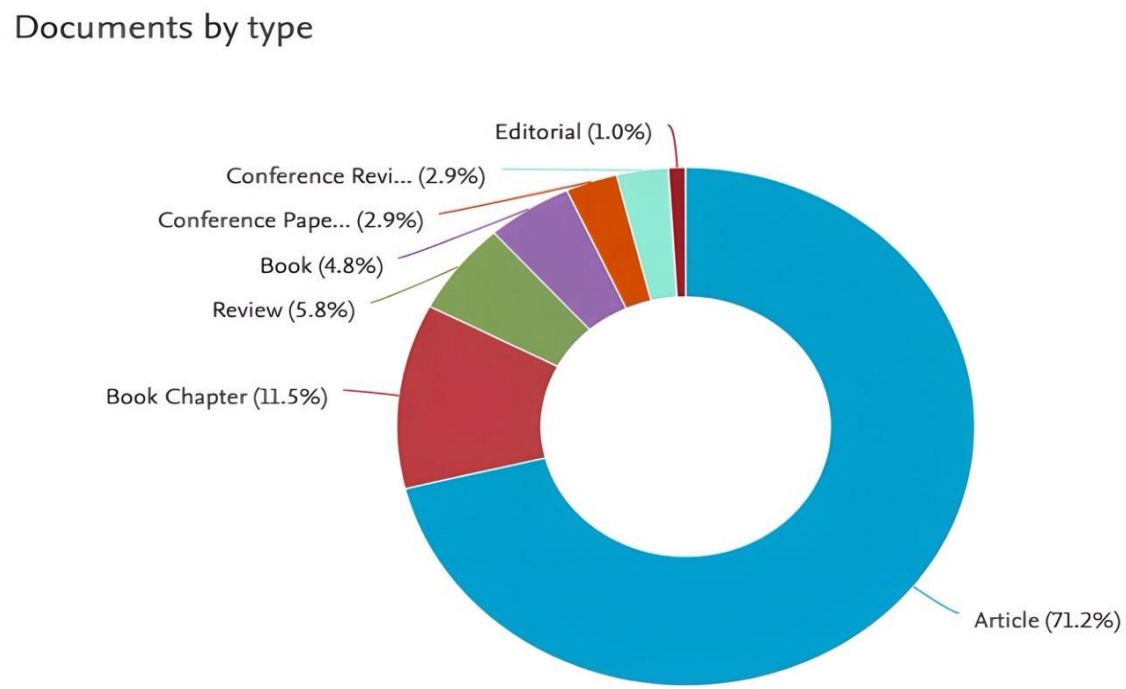
Overall, the trend suggests that there was a growing interest in the sharing economy from Islamic perspectives from the mid-2000s, with the most significant activity in the mid-2010s. The peaks and troughs in the graph could reflect the development of academic and public interest in these topics, influenced by economic cycles, technological developments, and global events.

Figure 1: Total Number of Documents



Aside from examining the number of publications per year in the field of the sharing economy from Islamic perspectives, it is equally insightful to consider the types of publications that have emerged so far. From Figure 2, we observed a predominant distribution of publication types, with articles comprising 71.1%, book chapters comprising 11.5%, and review papers accounting for 6%. Together, these three categories represent 88.6% of all publications. This is complemented by a smaller yet significant presence of books, conference papers, and conference review papers, which make up 10.5 % of the total. This distribution not only reflects the diverse nature of scholarly output in the sharing economy but also underscores the dominance of certain types of academic contributions, particularly articles and book chapters, in shaping the discourse and development of this field.

Figure 2: Documents By Type



Predominantly Utilized Keywords

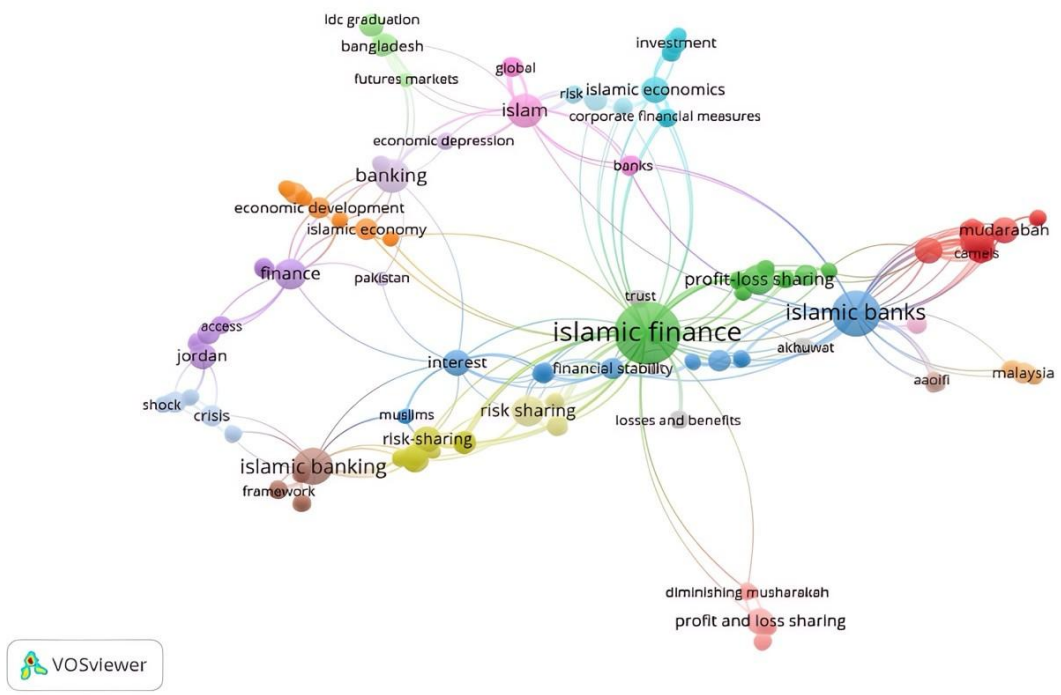
In addition, Figure 3 presents a concentration map of the co-occurrence analysis pertaining to the indicated terms, linking those that tend to appear together in accordance with their actual position on the map. The visualization indicates that the keywords "Islamic finance" and "Islamic banking" are central nodes, suggesting they are pivotal in the literature. Keywords like "risk-sharing," "interest," and "investment" are also significant, which aligns with the principles of the sharing economy and Islamic finance that emphasize risk-sharing and prohibit interest

(*riba'*).

From this figure, we can differentiate several prominent clusters. For instance, the green cluster is focusing on core concepts of Islamic finance, such as "Islamic banking," "profit-loss sharing," "Islamic finance," and "financial stability." This cluster suggested a significant body of research concentrated on the foundational principles and stability mechanisms of Islamic financial systems. The blue cluster highlights the geographical and regulatory aspects with terms like "Malaysia," "AAOIFI" (Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions), and "Islamic banks". Red cluster contains terms like "*mudarabah*" and "*diminishing musharakah,*" which are specific contract types used in Islamic finance, indicating in-depth research into these financial instruments for the sharing economy.

On the other hand, the yellow cluster focuses on the broader economic implications and concepts such as "economic development," "banking," and "finance," which may indicate a focus on how Islamic banking integrates with and impacts the broader economic environment of sharing economies. Purple Cluster includes terms like "access," "Jordan," and "crisis," which might explore the accessibility of Islamic finance and its role in economic stability or recovery, possibly with a focus on Jordan's economy.

Figure 3: Keywords Utilisation

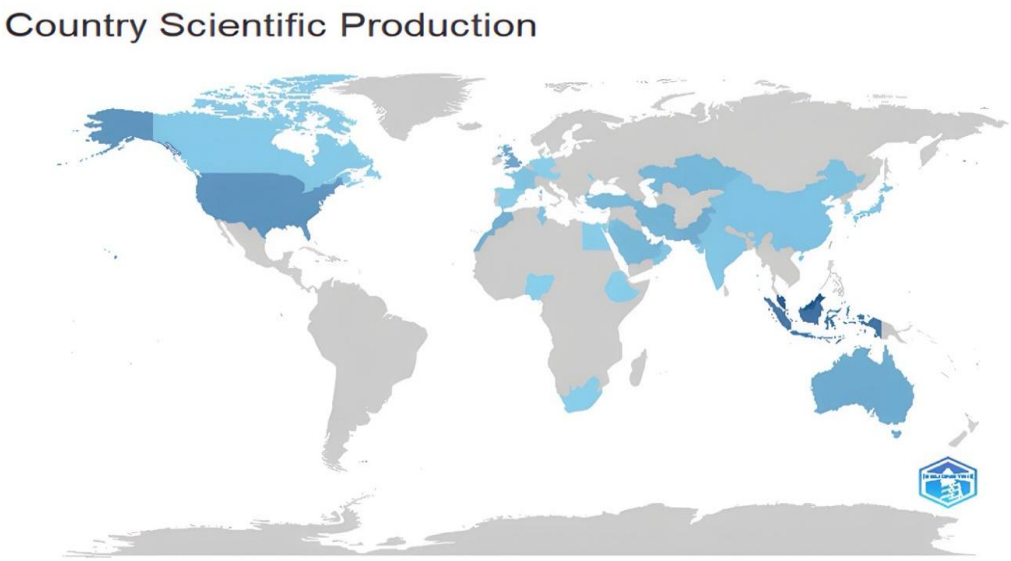


Research Output by Country

The data provided in Figure 4 appears to be a frequency table listing various regions and the number of documents and publications, related to the field of Islamic finance or the sharing economy, based on the previous context. Malaysia (36), Indonesia (27), and the USA (16) have the highest frequencies, indicating that these countries are significant contributors to the field or are heavily associated with the topic in the literature.

For Malaysia and Indonesia, this is consistent with their status as influential players in Islamic finance and the sharing economy. The UK (14), Australia, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (each with 10) show moderate levels of occurrence. This suggests a substantial level of activity or interest in the subject matter within these regions. Countries like Iran, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and others with fewer than ten instances have a lower frequency, indicating less representation in the dataset. However, they still contribute to the body of literature or the context of the analysis. There are several countries, including Austria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Germany, Moldova, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa, and Spain, with only one instance noted. This could mean that these countries have emerging interests or nascent activities in the field being studied, or possibly that they are underrepresented in the dataset. This frequency distribution provided insights into geographic trends, showing where research or activities related to the dataset's topic are most concentrated. For a field like the sharing economy, one might expect higher frequencies in technologically advanced regions or where such business models are widely adopted.

Figure 4: Research Output Based on Country



Contributing Authors and Their Publications

Figure 5 shows the contributing authors and the number of publications that they have within the sharing economy field from Islamic perspectives. With a total of 5 publications, Mirakhor appears to be the most prolific within this dataset. This indicates a strong contribution to the field and suggests that Mirakhor might be a key figure or thought leader in this area of research. Also, Hassan MK., with 4 publications, is a significant contributor. The number of publications suggests sustained research interest and expertise in the subject matter. The authors, such as Azmat S., Cattelan V., and Shirazi NS., are key contributors with three publications each, potentially contributing significantly to the field. Likewise, authors with two publications, such as Abduh M., Abdul Razak L., Azad ASMS, Danlami MR, and Ghaffar H., add to the range of studies and viewpoints on the Islamic sharing economy. These individuals might be new to the field or focused on niche areas within the larger topic. Even authors with fewer publications can be very influential if their work is frequently cited and serves as a basis for ongoing research.

Table 2 provides the list of authors along with the number of documents they have published and their average citations per document in a particular field. A higher citation rate indicates that an author's work is frequently referenced by others, suggesting its importance and influence on research. For example, Hassan MK's high citation rate suggests that his work is highly influential and contributes significantly to the advancement of the field of Islamic sharing economy. Meanwhile, both Azad ASMS and Ghaffar H stand out with the highest citation rates among this group (3.9), indicating their work is gaining recognition and may have a significant impact.

Figure 5: Authors and number of Publication

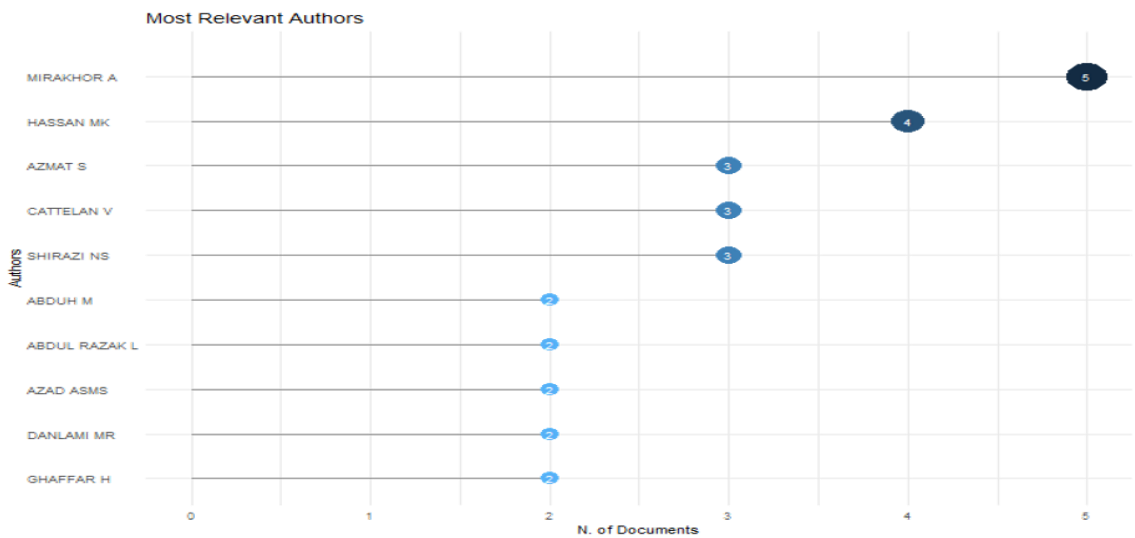


Table 2: Authors, Publications, and Citations

Author	Documents	Citations
Mirakhor A	5	4.79
Hassan MK	4	5.04
Azmat S	3	3.9
Catelan V	3	1
Shirazi NS	3	1.65
Abduh M	2	2.33
Abdul Razak L.	2	2.33
Azad ASMS	2	3.9
Danlami MR	2	2.33
Ghaffar H.	2	3.9

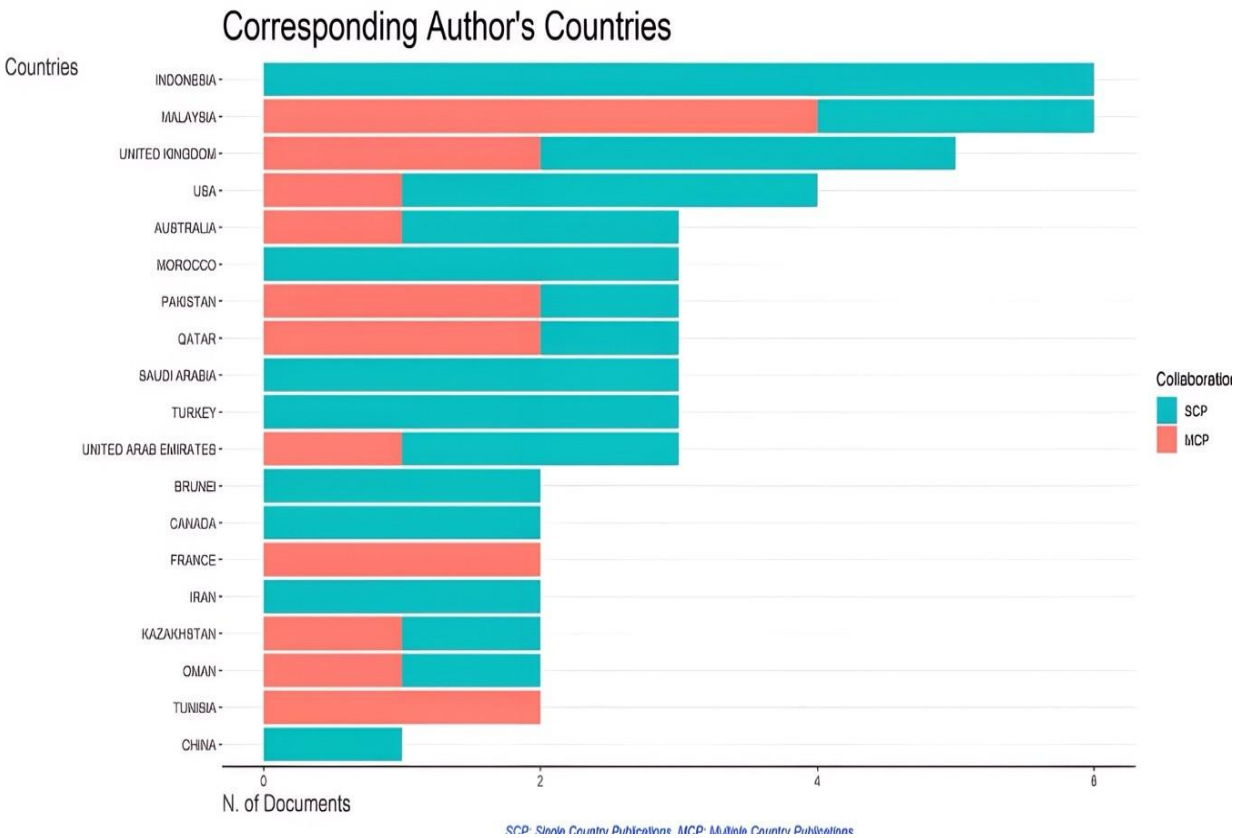
Most Corresponding Authors' Countries

The bar chart in Figure 6 shows the number of documents attributed to corresponding authors' countries, with a distinction between Single Country Publications (SCP) and Multiple Country Publications (MCP). Indonesia has the highest number of documents associated with corresponding authors from the country, with a balance between SCP and MCP. This indicates that Indonesian researchers not only contribute significantly to the body of literature but also frequently collaborate with international researchers. Malaysia shows a strong presence in both SCP and MCP, with a particularly high incidence of MCP. This suggests that Malaysian researchers are also highly active in international collaborations within the field, such as Indonesia, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

Meanwhile, the UK has a greater number of SCP compared to MCP, indicating that UK authors tend to publish within their own country but also participate in international research collaborations to a lesser extent. The USA also has a similar pattern to the UK, with a higher number of SCP, reflecting a strong domestic research output with some degree of international collaboration. Australian corresponding authors have a balanced number of SCP and MCP, showing a healthy mix of domestic research and international collaborative efforts.

From this data, we can infer that Indonesia and Malaysia are particularly collaborative countries in the context of this field, engaging significantly with international partners. The UK and the USA, while also involved in international collaborations, show a tendency to produce research within their national boundaries.

Figure 6: Corresponding Author's Countries



Most Cited Countries

Figure 7 shows a horizontal bar graph representing the "Most Cited Countries" in relation to the sharing economy from an Islamic perspective. Each bar's length indicates the number of citations that publications from each country have received. With 138 citations, the UK stands out as the most cited country. This suggests that research on the sharing economy originating from the UK has had a significant impact on the field, with UK-based studies being referenced frequently in other scholarly works.

On the other hand, Malaysia, with fifty-eight citations, is also a major contributor to the sharing economy from Islamic perspectives' literature. The high number of citations implies that the research from Malaysia is both prolific and influential. While the USA is often a leader in many research areas, in this dataset (47 citations), it is slightly less cited than the UK and Malaysia. With 45 citations, Germany's research output is also influential, reflecting a strong academic interest in the sharing economy. The UAE has 42 citations, which is notable given the country's focus on diversifying its economy and potentially investing in sharing economy research.

Meanwhile, Iran shows 33 citations, suggesting its research is recognised and referenced by the academic community. Indonesia, with 29 citations, is an active contributor to the field, especially given its large economy and population. Pakistan and Oman, with 22 and 20 citations respectively, have a presence in the field, though their impact is less than that of the other countries. Lastly, Australia, with 19 citations, indicates that Australian research in this area is recognised but less cited compared to the other countries listed. It's important to note that citation counts can be influenced by numerous factors, including the size of the research community in each country, the presence of leading researchers or institutions, and the country's overall investment in the sharing economy as a research topic. The highest citations are for those papers using mixed methods, mixing qualitative and quantitative research, followed by quantitative studies. Table 3 highlights the top 5 active research areas within the Islamic sharing economy, where scholars like Ahmed A. and NIENHAUS V have contributed to discussions on leveraging Islamic principles for financial structures, risk-sharing mechanisms, and economic sustainability.

Figure 7: Most cited Countries

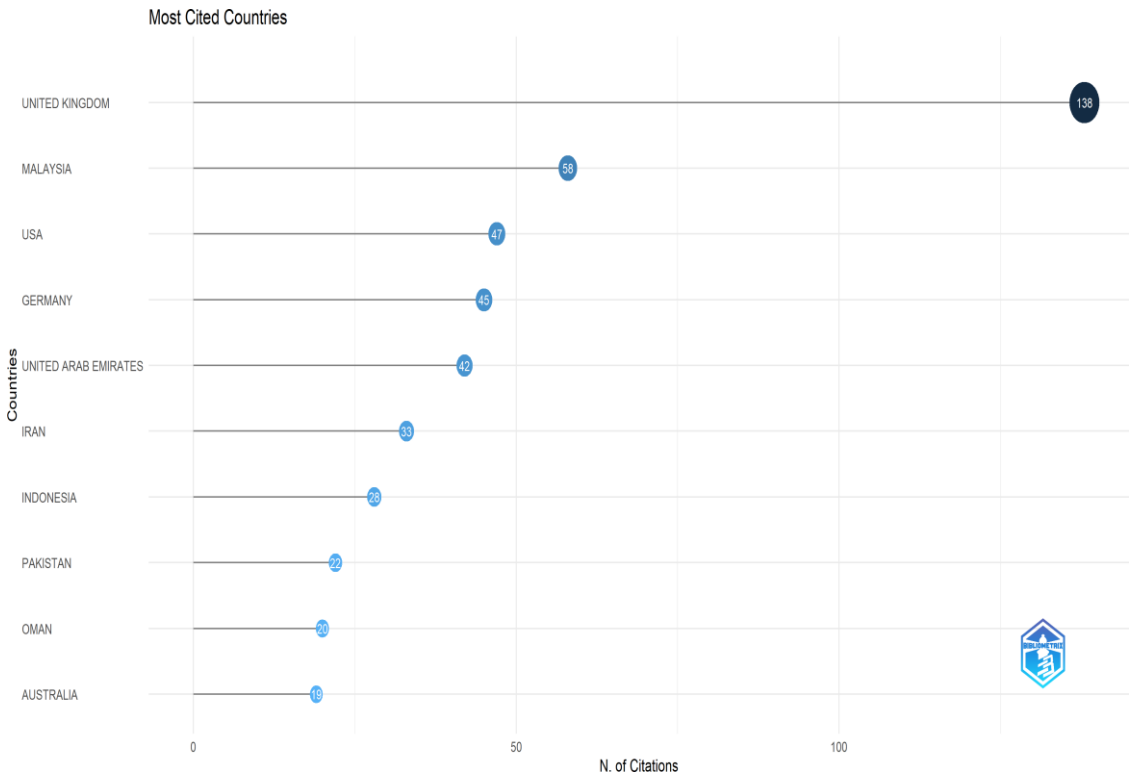


Table 3: Authors, Publications Title, Source and Citations

Author/Country	Year	Title	Source/Journal	Total Citation
AHMED A,/UK	2010	Global financial crisis: an Islamic finance perspective	International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management	113
NIENHAUS V/GERMANY	2011	Islamic Finance Ethics and *Shari'ah* Law in the Aftermath of the Crisis	Ethical Perspectives	45
LEWER JJ/USA	2007	Religion and International Trade: Does the Sharing of a Religious Culture Facilitate the Formation of Trade Networks?	American Journal of Economics and Sociology	43
KABIR HASSAN M/USA	1999	Islamic banking in theory and practice: the experience of Bangladesh	Managerial Finance	39

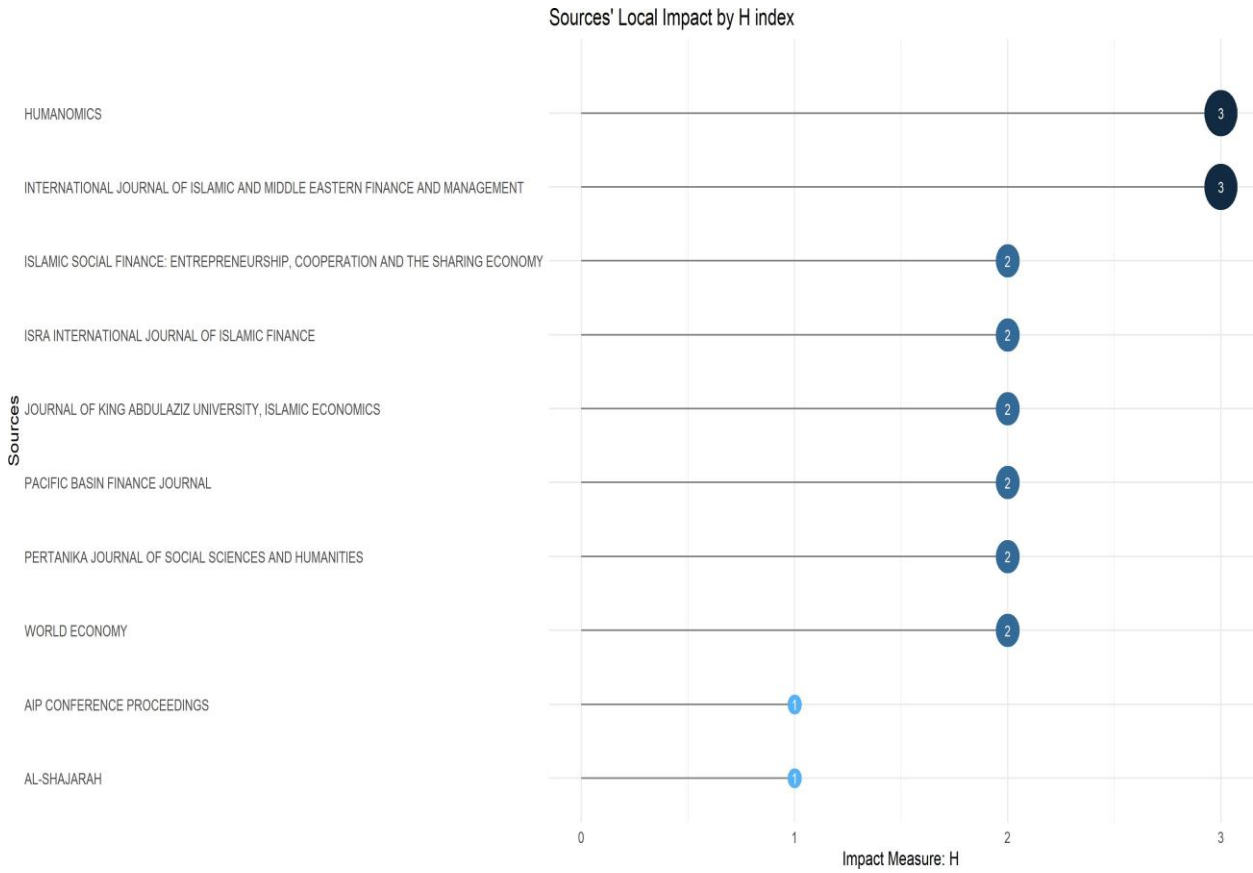
SHINKAFI AA/MALAYSIA	2017	Contemporary Islamic economic studies on *Maqasid Shari'ah*: a systematic literature review	Humanomics	26

Most Impact Journals by H-Index

The scatter plot provided in Figure 8 lists various journals and their corresponding H index, which measures both the productivity and citation impact of the publications within the journals. Humanomics has the highest H-index of 3 among the journals listed. This indicates that at least three articles from this journal have been cited three times or more. This suggests that Humanomics has a major influence in the field, with multiple articles that have made an impact on the research of the sharing economy from Islamic perspectives.

International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management also has an H-index of 3. This shows it is equally influential as Humanomics, with at least three articles that have been cited at least three times. Meanwhile, Islamic Social Finance: Entrepreneurship, Cooperation, and the Sharing Economy, with an H-index of 2, it shows that at least two articles have been cited two times or more, indicating the journal has a recognized impact within its specific niche in the field of sharing economy from Islamic perspectives. Furthermore, ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance has an H-index of 2, which means that it has published at least two articles with a citation count of two or more, reflecting its standing in the realm of sharing economy from Islamic perspectives research. Similarly, Journal of King Abdulaziz University, Islamic Economics shares an H-index of 2 with the previously mentioned journals, indicating its role as a source of impactful research in the sharing economy from Islamic perspectives.

Figure 8: Most Impact Journals by H-Index



Co-authorship network

For this analysis, the threshold for the minimum number of documents by an author and the minimum number of citations by an author was set to 3. This resulted in 37 authors being grouped into 9 clusters. Figure 9 presents the co-authorship network analysis by authors. We can see at least three main clusters indicated by their distinct colors: green, red, and blue. The red cluster has "Kabir Hassan (1999)" and "Abdul-Rahman (2020)" as prominent nodes, indicating they are key authors within their cluster, possibly with a high number of collaborations or publications. In the green cluster, “Hosain (2016)" appears as a central node, suggesting a pivotal role in collaborations within this group. The blue cluster seems to have "azmat (2020)" and "azmat (2021)” as significant nodes, which may be the same author with multiple key publications over the years.

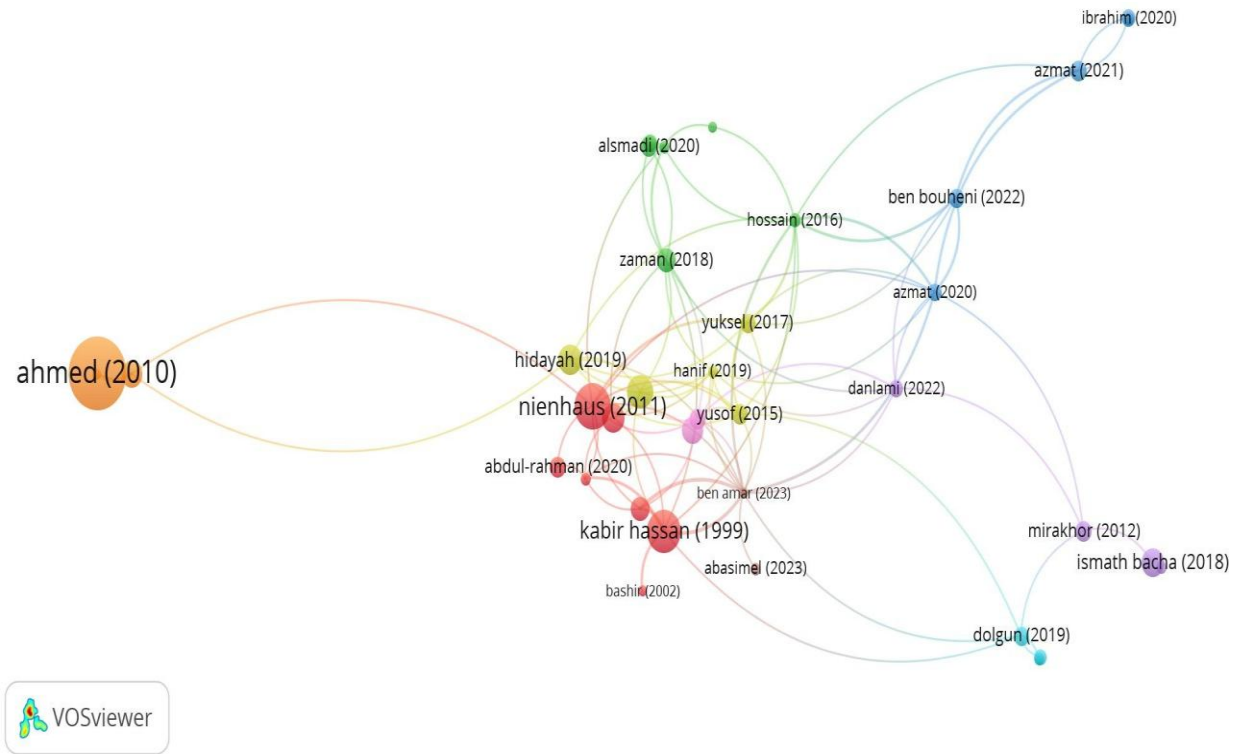
There are visible lines connecting authors from different clusters (e.g., lines between the green and red clusters), indicating interdisciplinary collaborations. These connections are essential as they show the flow of information and research ideas between different groups.

The density of connections within each cluster varies, where the red cluster shows a solid network of collaborations, suggesting a well-established group of researchers who often work together. The green cluster has a moderate number of connections, possibly indicating a growing or less centralised research group. The blue cluster, while

Having central authors seems less densely connected, which might suggest a newer or more distributed research community.

The years next to each author's name suggest the timeline of their contributions. For instance, "Kabir Hassan (1999)" is one of the earliest works referenced, which could mean this author is a foundational figure in this field. In contrast, authors with more recent dates, like "Ben Bouheni (2022)" might represent newer entrants into the field. The thickness of the lines connecting authors such as "Nienhaus (2011)" with "Abdul Rahman (2020)" and "Kabir Hassan (1999)" suggests strong collaborative ties, potentially indicating frequent co-authorship or highly influential collaborative works. The positioning of authors like "Ahmed (2010)" on the periphery with a large node size but fewer connections might indicate an influential author in the field who collaborates less frequently or whose main collaborators are not included in this dataset. From this visualisation, stakeholders can identify key authors, understand collaboration dynamics, and potentially assess the impact and evolution of research within this field.

Figure 9: Co-authorship network



Co-authorship by Country Network

For this analysis, the threshold for the minimum number of papers by a country and the minimum number of citations by a country was set to 5. Ten countries were grouped into seven clusters. Figure 8 depicts the network visualisation of co-authorship by countries. The network shows clusters of countries that are more intricately connected. For example, Turkey, Malaysia, and Qatar are intricately connected, as indicated by the thicker and shorter lines between them. This suggests these countries have stronger relations with each other within the context of the data.

Countries like the United States and the United Kingdom are positioned on the periphery of the network with multiple but thinner connections, indicating a broader but less concentrated interaction with other countries in the network. The United States is a prominent node connected to various countries with green lines. This could indicate a specific type of collaboration during which these collaborations were most active. The green lines also connect Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Australia, suggesting these countries may have a common link to the United States in this context. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom is at the centre of the blue cluster, with connections to the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, and Turkey. This cluster might represent a different type of collaboration. The blue lines are less dense than the green, suggesting the relationships might be less frequent or of a different nature. Malaysia and Qatar are connected by several thick red lines, indicating a strong relationship between these two countries. Turkey also has significant red connections, implying a strong collaborative link with Malaysia and Qatar. This might represent a more recent time frame or a particular type of interaction, such as trade or research in a specialised academic field.

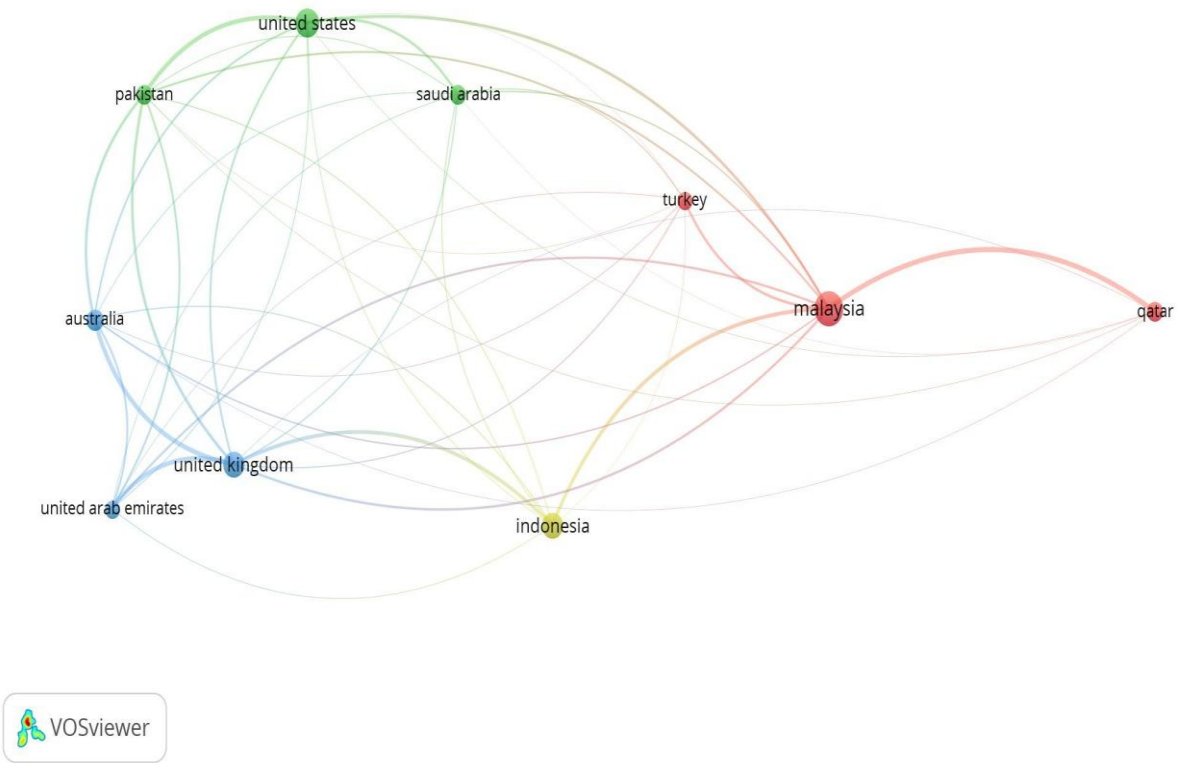
Furthermore, the size of the nodes for Malaysia and Qatar is relatively small compared to the United States or the United Kingdom, but they have thick red lines connecting them, which implies a strong bilateral relationship. The peripheral position of the United States and the United Kingdom, with their larger nodes, suggests they have numerous but less concentrated connections.

There are several lines connecting countries from different clusters. For example, Turkey is connected to both the green and blue clusters, indicating it has multiple collaborative relationships across the network. The thickness of these inter-cluster lines varies, reflecting the strength of these cross-cluster relationships. The network's density, meaning the number of

connections each node has, varies significantly. The central positioning of the United Kingdom and the density of connections around it may indicate a central role in the network. In contrast, the United States has fewer, but more widely dispersed connections, suggesting a more global reach. The United Arab Emirates and Indonesia have fewer connections, and they are thinner, indicating less intense or fewer collaborative interactions.

The visual also implies that while some countries like the United States and the United Kingdom have extensive international links, others like Malaysia and Qatar may have fewer but stronger bilateral connections.

Figure 10: Co- authorship by country network



Conclusion, implication of the study, and recommendation

The paper provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the sharing economy within the context of Islamic principles. The study (i) identifies a significant gap in understanding the sharing economy's coexistence and benefits within Islamic contexts; (ii) utilizes citation analysis and bibliographic coupling to map the intellectual structure and dynamics of this research field; (iii) analyses a wide range of data, including scholarly articles, books, conference papers, and grey literature; (iv) highlights geographical trends and contributions by various

countries and (v) points out prolific authors and impactful journals in the field.

The sharing economy, especially in Islamic contexts, is rapidly evolving. This dynamic nature is characterized by a continuous adaptation and integration of Islamic principles with modern economic practices. It encompasses various facets, including Islamic finance, social entrepreneurship, ethical business practices, and technological advancements. Each of these aspects contributes uniquely to the understanding of the sharing economy within an Islamic framework.

The bibliometric analysis undertaken in this study provides a systematic overview of existing research. It identifies the growing interest in aligning sharing economy practices with Islamic contexts, the exploration of Islamic finance models in the sharing economy, and the impact of technology in facilitating these alignments. The study also highlights the work of prominent authors, institutions, and countries that have contributed significantly to this field. This includes identifying leading scholars, pivotal research papers, and influential academic journals.

Indeed, the key publications that have shaped the understanding of the sharing economy in Islamic contexts are identified. These works serve as foundational texts for both current research and future studies. In addition, the research shows an intersection of various disciplines-economics, Islamic studies, technology, and social sciences. This interdisciplinary approach provides a richer and more nuanced understanding of the sharing economy within Islamic principles. The study indicates that interpretations and applications of Islamic principles in the context of the sharing economy are continually evolving. This evolution is influenced by global economic trends, technological advancements, culture, and changing societal norms. Our results have implications for professionals, offering guidance to researchers in choosing a study design that could result in greater influence of their work, as well as identifying the areas where these subjects are most appreciated. Furthermore, our study indicates that the field is still in its developmental stages and expanding, highlighting the necessity for academics and organizations to further develop networks and collaborations.

Future research should focus on further exploring the unique aspects of the sharing economy within Islamic contexts. This includes delving deeper into Islamic finance principles in relation to the sharing economy, examining case studies from leading countries in this area, and considering the implications of these findings for policy and practice. Additionally, fostering international collaborations and interdisciplinary approaches can enrich the understanding and

practical application of the sharing economy in Islamic contexts. In summary, the research provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state and dynamics of the sharing economy within Islamic contexts. It opens avenues for further research and discussion on how Islamic principles can be integrated into modern economic practices, benefiting both academic and practical fields.

Limitations of the study

One limitation of this study is that the reliance solely on the Scopus database for sourcing publications might have overlooked significant contributions in books and other indexed sources and non-traditional formats, as well as works published in less prominent or non-indexed journals. Consequently, future bibliometric analyses should consider a broader range of sources, including books and local publications, to mitigate the potential bias arising from database selection and to capture a more comprehensive scope of the research landscape.

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International Relations Theory and the Muslim World: A Bibliometrics Analysis

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Abstract

In the 21st-century era of globalization, massive military conflicts, disasters, terrorist attacks, and economic complexity that can be seen in the international financial crisis, the Muslim world should reconsider how it interacts with the rest of the world to be more consistent with changes in the global arena while remaining loyal to Islam as a religion and a way of life. Based on that, we agree this task will be challenging because international relations have been a Western-centric field since the Second World War. However, the issue's complexity is not a reason to refuse to develop a comprehensive viewpoint based on explanations and analyses of the literature on international relations, leading the Muslim world to promote a separate international relations (IR) theory in the future. In doing so, we need to review the literature in the field to introduce a comprehensive understanding of the Muslim World in international relations. In this study, the researchers will collect and refer to the major references and sources that introduce and explain the Muslim World

in IR, mainly focusing on the Web of Science database. After that, the method can be figured out and explained using a few conditions that can be taken when choosing to review literature: 1) Identify articles related to the Muslim World in the IR field. 2) Highlighting the Muslim world's scholars' and experts' understanding of international relations by referring to major issues. 3) Analysing literature evidence supporting the IR and the Muslim World using bibliometrics analysis. and 4) Reflect on the limitations of the IR theory in explaining the Muslim World, as it is mainly based on Western perspectives and thoughts. In conclusion, thinking about the limitations of theories of international relations leads us to talk about moving beyond Western dominance in (IR) and the Islamic perspective, and how it might affect the Muslim world when dealing with international relations. The researchers believe Islamic characteristics can be a powerful alternative to current international relations theories and thoughts.

Keywords: International Relations (IR), Islamic thought, Muslim World, Islamic perspective, Western perspective.

JEL- Classification: F50, F54, F59.

Introduction

International Relations (IR) as an academic field is relatively new, and Western literature and thought are by far the most prominent in this field. The extent of its bias affects how well it understands, explains, and predicts events in non-Western regions (Uz Zaman & Yasmin, 2022,). International relations are notoriously challenging to explain with ideas like realism and liberalism, which fail to capture their complexities. Not simply as a reflection of the East-West divide or non-Western vs Western discourse, but also in its own right, Islam has become a major focus of attention in this context, but also as an approach with its own principles, concepts, and views on international relations theory (IRT) (Zandi, 2018). Moreover, there has been a growing body of literature in recent years reflecting the new effort to understand and analyse the role and status of the Muslim world in international relations (Acharya & Buzan, 2010; Vicente, 2012). Nevertheless, there is still a gap in the literature, suggesting that further elaboration is required.

International relations theories are significant because they provide frameworks for understanding and interpreting the complex and dynamic character of global politics (De Buck & Hosli, 2020). They provide instruments for analyzing and forecasting the behaviors of states and other players, as well as alternative viewpoints on the origins and implications of international relations (Padilla, 2021). Theories are also seen as helping to organize the field of international relations and providing a foundation for future research and analysis, according to Chidiebere and Onwutuebe (2022). Scholars can develop new knowledge and understanding of international relations by elaborating and/or testing existing theories.

Theories can also inform policymaking and government decisions and actions in the international arena. By understanding the meaning behind various theories, policymakers can make better-informed decisions on how to respond to the challenges and opportunities facing the world (Teschke, 2002). Furthermore, theories are important in the realm of international relations, as they help explain and understand international politics, structure the field, and guide policymaking (De Buck & Hosli, 2020). Several theories have been proposed within the Muslim world, or theories that specifically focus on Muslim-majority countries (Kalkan, 2023). The theories present different

viewpoints on both the causes and effects of international relations and offer different instruments to analyze and explain state and others' behavior.

However, this is not the case with theories of international relations, which have been mostly developed in the Western world and have underrepresented the Muslim world (Rapanyane & Shai, 2023). As a result, there may be a perception that the Muslim world lacks a theory of international relations, but this is not the case (Ihor, 2022).

According to Olga & Yurii (2022), Manan (2022), and Adis (2022), the Muslim world is a complex and diverse region with numerous major problems in international relations. 1) Political instability and conflict: Many Muslim-majority countries have had political instability and conflict, such as civil wars, coups, foreign intervention, etc. Instability has had a detrimental effect on the development of these countries, causing human suffering and economic turmoil. 2) Terrorism has posed a problem in some Muslim-majority countries, either as the source or the target. The security and stability of these countries have been affected by the terror campaign, and relations with other countries have been affected as well. 3) Muslim countries have been confronted with many accusations in the field of human rights, particularly in women's rights and minority rights. This can cause dismay and criticism from other countries and organizations and has damaged relations with the other side of the world. 4) Muslim majority countries are characterized by poverty, unequal economic development, and underdevelopment. This has posed difficulties in delivering basic services and in raising the standard of living and reducing the capacity of these countries to fully engage with the world economy. The political, economic, and cultural differences between the Muslim majority countries and the West, especially the United States, have soured relations between the two. This has caused conflicts and misunderstandings, affecting cooperation and collaboration on some issues.

However, it is important to note that Muslim academics have contributed to knowledge and perspectives in the field and, as a result, have produced substantial scholarship and writing on international relations from a Muslim perspective. Meanwhile, there is no single "Muslim theory" of international relations accepted as fact. For many reasons, the Muslim world might have had

less impact on the evolution of international relations theory than the West. The marginalization and exclusion of the Muslim world from international politics is one of the reasons (Grinin, 2019).

Methodology

Data Sources

Web of Science (WoS) is an authoritative, widely used research database of publications and citations. It is considered important due to its long history, comprehensive coverage, and the Science Citation Index it is based on (Visser et al., 2020). While the Web of Science has evolved into a research and education discipline, it is important to consider its impact and relevance in the changing digital world. We must emphasize the need to combine extensive coverage with adjustable filters to narrow the literature, given the advantages and disadvantages of various data sources (Birkle et al., 2020). However, we have limited our bibliometric analysis to WoS for time and methodological reasons.

Relevant publications were retrieved from the Web of Science (WOS) database using the search terms "Muslim World Politics", "Islamic Theory of IR", "International Relations and the Muslim World", and "Islam and IR" with publication dates from January 2000 to August 2023. The rationale for limiting the publication to these periods is to trace contemporary literature on IR and the Muslim World since the beginning of the 21st century. The examination includes various materials, including original articles, reviews, and proceedings. Articles were selected and filtered for further analysis. The metadata was downloaded and stored in CSV format.

Data Analysis

Bibliometric analysis is important in the human sciences because it allows researchers to examine trends, patterns, and impact on research within a particular field. It provides quantitative and qualitative insights into the publication outputs, author contributions, and conceptual structure of a research area (Silva et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2022). Biblioshiny, a software tool built on RStudio, is particularly useful for conducting bibliometric analysis, as it enables researchers to map

scientific production, identify influential authors, countries, journals, and articles, and highlight research opportunities and gaps in a specific field. It helps researchers comprehensively understand the current state and trends in a research area, thereby informing future research directions and decision-making (Góngora Orjuela, 2010).

By utilizing bibliometric methods and tools such as Biblioshiny, researchers in the humanities can effectively analyze and evaluate scholarly output, identify research trends, and advance knowledge in their respective fields. Counting publications and conducting citation analysis can be challenging, but these methods provide valuable insights into the organization of sciences (Ivan, 2011). Bibliometric allows us to capture talent, success, and place in the history of science and humanity, making it a powerful tool for understanding and evaluating research (Ivan, 2011). However, using bibliometric studies in human sciences research is often critical and challenging for exploring underlying issues, especially in a developing field such as the current research (see, for example, Ton 2010). There is a need for more curiosity about the context within which information is produced and used, as well as a better understanding of the purpose and application of bibliometrics (Ian, 2011).

Bibliometrix (http://www.bibliometrix.org) is an R-based bibliometric analysis programme (Mohamed, 2023). This package includes Biblioshiny, the web application for Bibliometrix, which is used in combination with it. RStudio Version 2023.06.1-524 was used to install and load the Bibliometrix package. Consequently, the Biblioshiny package was loaded in the R console by the digitized “biblioshiny()” command. The detailed methods and algorithms for both packages were explained elsewhere (Ullah et al., 2022). The metadata was transferred to the Biblioshiny interface for further examination. The outputs (publication patterns and collaborations), publications, and authors' keywords were analyzed. Keywords with similar meanings were combined into a single term before the analysis. The analysis's visual results were downloaded and stored as .png files.

Results And Discussion

Analysis of Publication Outputs and Scientific Collaborations

Table 1 summarizes the results of the analysis, which found 137 articles published between 2000 and 2023 that discussed the intersection of international relations theory and Muslim world studies. It should be noted that only 65 of the total 137 articles are written in English. The Web of Science, however, also provides access to abstracts, keywords, and other details about these articles written in English. There were 56 distinct publications, mostly journals, that featured these articles. The publication growth rate over the past two decades was -2.97, with the peak years being 2018 and 2022.

Table 1. The leading information of the selected articles gathered by Biblioshiny

MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	2000:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	56
Documents	137
Annual Growth Rate %	-2.97
Average citations per doc	5.088
Author's Keywords (DE)	238
Single-authored docs	116
Co-Authors per Doc	1.18

Many experts from various nations, including the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Russia, China, India, Singapore, Turkey, Qatar, Iran, and most European countries, contributed to this field of study, with an average of 1.2 co-authors per document. Figure 1 illustrates a map of the country's scientific productivity.

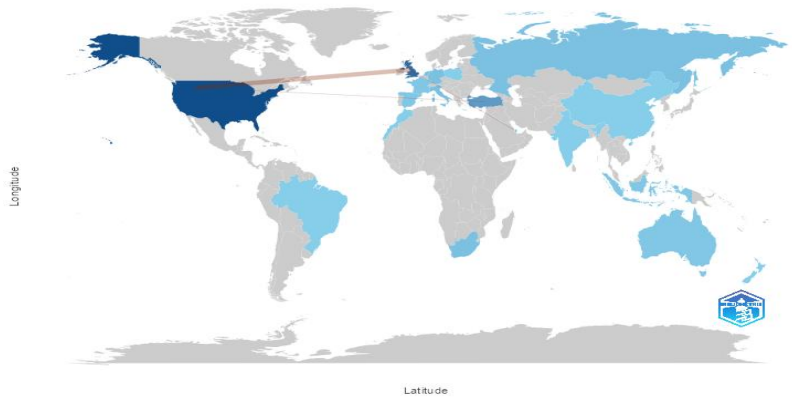

Figure 1. Scientific collaboration world map.

Countries with a deeper blue tone have more publications. The red line connects the two countries that collaborate the most frequently.

The politics of top journals in WoS tend to prioritise authors from the Global North, resulting in a lopsided representation of mostly US and UK authors. Also, as a means of publication, the English language has been an obstacle for many scholars and researchers from the global South, particularly from Muslim countries, to publish in top journals that require extensive editing. This is evident in the dominance of authors from these countries in the top-tier journals, while authors from Muslim countries often publish in non-WoS sources. The hierarchical nature of the discipline and the rankings of journals create additional dilemmas and stress for researchers from lower-ranked countries, who must make significant sacrifices to publish (Linders, 2016).

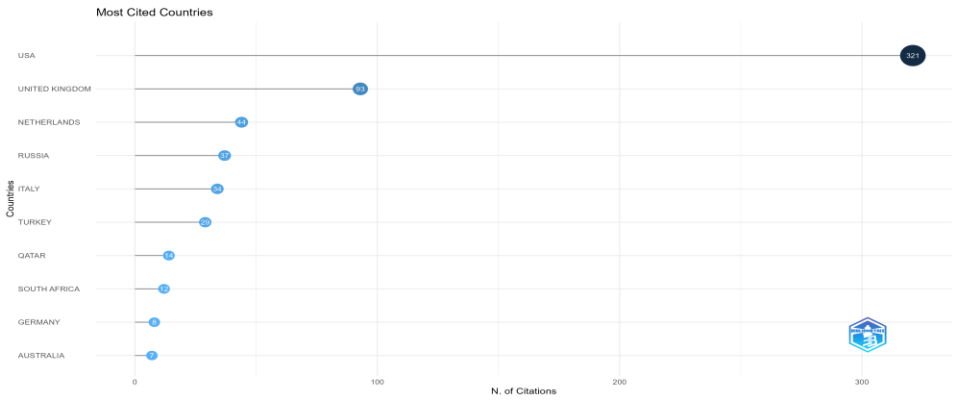

Figure. 2. Most Cited Countries.

The Bibliometrics analysis also shows that the most cited countries are the United States with almost 321 citations, the United Kingdom with 93, the Netherlands with 44, Russia with 37, Italy with 34, Turkey with 29, Qatar with 14, South Africa with 12, and finally, Germany and Australia with 8 and 7 citations, respectively. Figure 3 shows the most cited countries.

The Analysis of Sources

Research is the foundation of a strong argument, theory, or analysis. When constructing a bibliometrics analysis, including the most reliable and relevant sources in the study is essential. Without these sources, researchers may question the argument's validity, and the study may not achieve its purpose. Journal research papers are typically based on scholarly sources, including various documents. In our case, we used WoS. This section will present Bradford's law.

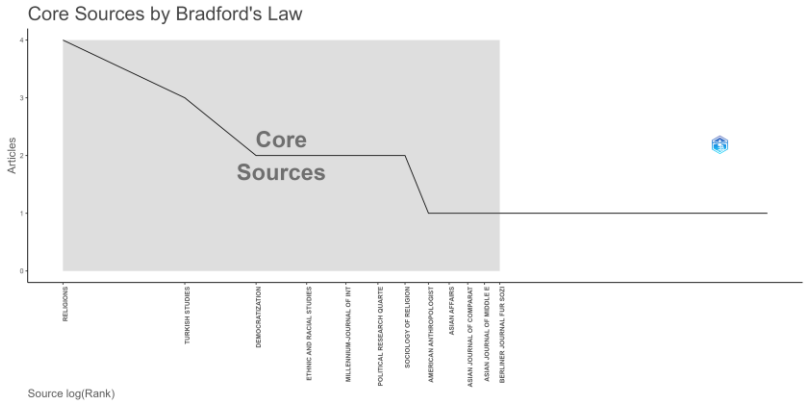

Figure 3. The Core Sources by Bradford's Law.

Bradford's law predicts that the number of journals will be higher in the second and third zones than in the first. As a result, if the number of journals in the core and intermediate zones is known, the overall number of journals with articles on a subject should be predictable. Once the total number of articles is known, an incomplete search can estimate how much helpful material is missing.

Table. 2. The Core Sources Zone 1

Source	Zone N
Religions	1
Turkish Studies	1
Democratization	1
Ethnic And Racial Studies	1
Millennium-Journal Of International Studies	1
Political Research Quarterly	1
Sociology Of Religion	1
American Anthropologist	1
Asian Affairs	1
Asian Journal Of Comparative Politics	1
Asian Journal Of Middle Eastern And Islamic Studies	1
Berliner Journal Fur Soziologie	1

The bibliometrics analysis shows that zone one, the core sources, includes 12 journals. This category includes almost 23 articles focusing on international relations and the Muslim world across topics such as religion, democracy, Islam, and the state's role. Zones 2 and 3 came with more sources and journal titles; however, almost every journal contributed to the topic interest, with only one document. It is also remarkable that, because of the nature of our topic, which includes several interdisciplinary disciplines, the same thing can be found in the relevance and nature of sources, which vary across different fields.

The Analysis of Keywords Output and Co-Occurrences

Keyword analysis is important for gaining insight into the topic and optimizing search results. It involves analyzing relevant words and phrases to understand the most used terms and concepts in international relations theory and the Muslim World. The process of keyword categorization is time-consuming, but using bibliometric analysis makes it more effective for identifying keywords used in the research. By quantifying and comparing keywords, researchers can improve the analysis and provide more objective reference opinions for researchers and scholars in the field. Keyword-based analysis, such as the most used concepts in articles, keyword clouds, keyword co-occurrences, and key clusters, can be useful. Selecting keywords is crucial for literature search and publication activities, as they act as "keys" to unlock relevant scientific papers.

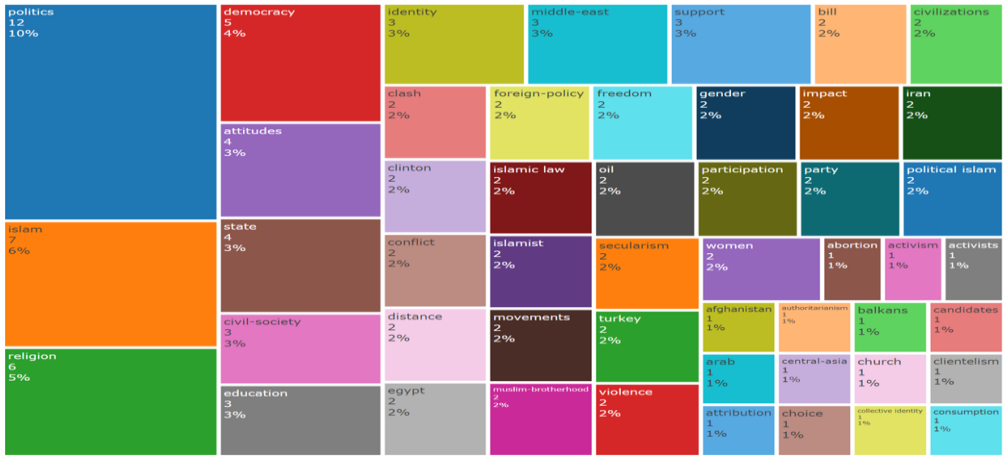

Figure 4. Tree Keywords. The more space a term occupies, the more evidence it has of its frequent use in articles.

Based on the keywords tree, the word politics is the most frequently used concept across 137 articles, with 10%. The second word is Islam with 6%, religion with 5%, democracy with 4%, attitude, state, civil society, education, identity, and the Middle East with 3% for each. Most of the remaining keywords and concepts are used between 1% and 2% in the targeted articles for this study. The focus keywords show that the authors and researchers are more aware of finding the relationship between politics, Islam, and religion. The following keyword, co-occurrence, explains this relation more.

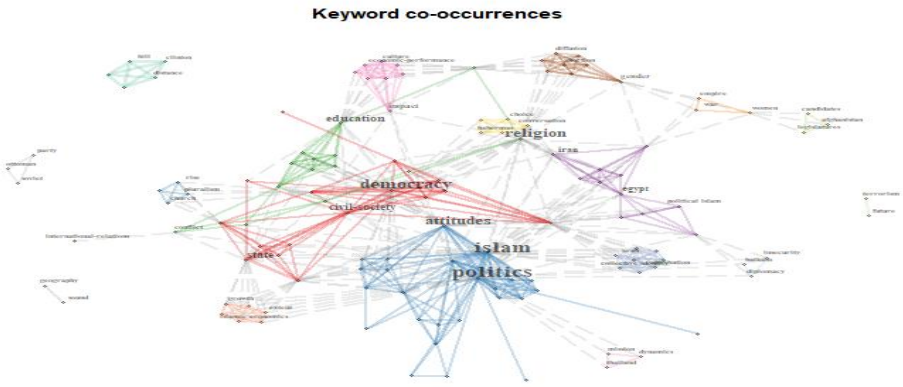

Figure 5. Keyword Co-occurrences.

In KCC, each keyword is represented as a node, and a link represents each co-occurrence of a pair of words. The significance of the connection between the pair is determined by the number of times a pair of words co-occurs in numerous articles. The network built in this manner represents accumulated domain knowledge that helps determine essential components and insights from the patterns and strengths of relationships among keywords in literature.

In this KCC, the main co-occurring words are politics and Islam, and attitude, with the most important relation shown in blue. It is followed by the red colour, which co-occurs with democracy, civil society, and the state, as there is a strong link among these concepts. Other words co-occur in some articles, highlighting the concept of religion, Iran, Egypt, Turkey, and political Islam. It is to show that articles also focus on case studies to explain and determine the Muslim World theory of IR by examining the politics of the leading parties in the countries and regions mentioned.

A Word Cloud is a graphical representation of data in the form of tags, which are often single words with significance indicated by size and colour. As unstructured text data continues to grow at an unprecedented rate, there is a surge in interdisciplinary research in the social sciences, particularly in political science and international relations. Therefore, there is a growing need to analyze the vast amounts of data generated by various database systems.

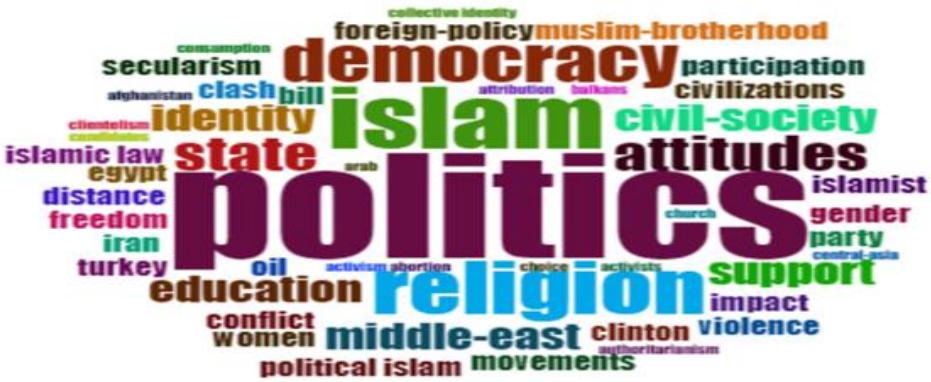

Figure 7. Keyword Cloud.

Word Cloud is an excellent method for visualizing data and obtaining insight into the most significant themes in each dataset by visualizing the word frequency in the text as a ranked list. Based on our data, the most visually prominent words are politics, Islam, religion, and democracy, followed by civil society, state, identity, and the Middle East. The result shows that the discussion among the researchers on international relations and the Muslim world is limited to these words.

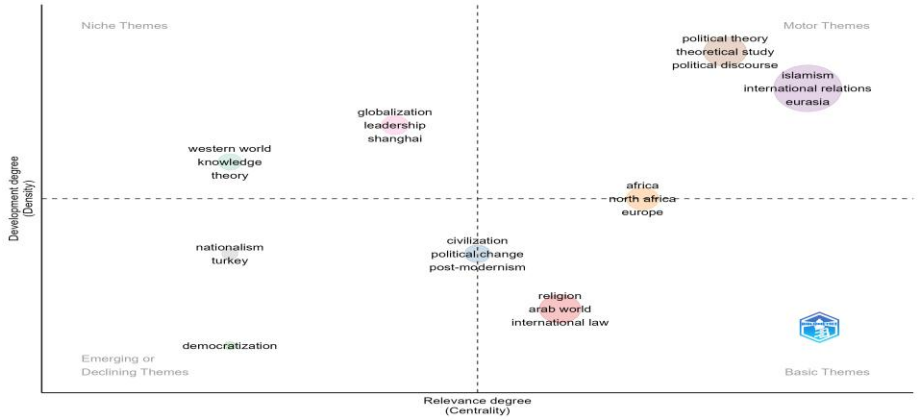

Figure. 8. Thematic Map

The X-axis indicates centrality (the degree of interaction between a network cluster and other clusters) and provides information about a subject's relevance. The Y-axis reflects density (i.e., the internal strength of a cluster network) and is considered to indicate the progression of the subject. As a result, the first zone identifies motor themes (that is, well-developed and essential themes for the structuring of a research field); the second zone identifies highly developed and isolated or niche themes (that is, themes of limited importance to the field); and the third zone identifies emerging or declining themes (that is, weakly developed and marginal themes). The third zone comprises rising or declining themes (i.e., poorly developed and marginal themes). In contrast, the fourth zone contains fundamental themes (i.e., generic subjects that cross over into other field study areas).

Table 3. Thematic Map Themes and Keyword Examples

Themes	Examples of Keywords
Motor themes	Political theory, theoretical study, Islamism, and international relations.
Niche	Examples: Western world, globalization, leadership, and theory.
Emerging or declining themes	Nationalism, Turkey, Democratization, and Civilization.
Basic themes	Religion, the Arab world, and international law.

Some assumptions make it possible to combine and integrate Western and non-Western approaches in IR. For instance, the central constructivist tenets of collective identity, common interest, shared knowledge, and practice are crucial for comprehending international relations reality from an Islamic viewpoint. This by highlighting how Emmanuel Adler and Alexander Wendt's theoretical underpinnings meticulously constructed an Islamic episteme in global politics. It is because Islam also promotes collective identity, such as the concept of *Ummah*, as well as social interest, *al-maslaha*, *maqāṣid al-shari'ah*, and the importance of ethics and norms. Islamic scholars and researchers such as Qutb and Davutoglu have developed an Islamic IR theory that engages with Western constructivist theories, offering a distinct understanding of Muslims' worldview and its application to international affairs. However, despite some commonalities

between the two approaches, their foundations and origins differ. As a result, for instance, when constructivism relies on society and the norms it produces, Islam refers to its divine sources, which are not subject to social norms.

Conclusion

There is a lack of modern Islamic *International Relations* theories, which can be attributed to various factors, including the reality of the nation-state, Western hegemony, and the nature of the current system. IR is a multi-disciplinary field that seeks to explain the mainspring of global politics. It encompasses various aspects such as politics, economics, political economy, diplomacy, and international history. The field of IR has experienced theoretical proliferation driven by interdisciplinary relations, leading to distinct directions for IR scholarship. IR is a transdisciplinary domain of knowledge that studies the world system, including the international one. Despite claims of diversity, IR has not been open to dialogue and has been criticized for being a hegemonic and colonial discipline with very little opportunity for penetration from an Islamic perspective to be taken seriously.

The field features a wide range of theories, concepts, debates, and schools of thought, providing an essential intellectual foundation for understanding global politics. In recent years, there has been a growing discussion of the role of non-Western approaches in international relations. Scholars have examined how Western approaches and theories can shape global political phenomena, including war, diplomacy, and development. To develop more satisfying explanations of global politics, it is necessary to interweave existing IR theories with other approaches and perspectives from around the world, such as the Islamic perspective, and to adapt the theories to fit regional realities. With all the differences and complexities, it is not logical to have a few theories like realism, liberalism, and constructivism to explain and understand all the world's regions.

Acknowledgement

This research is part of a project funded by the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in 2023. Thus, the researchers would like to thank IIIT for its financial support and continuous encouragement in advancing research and knowledge inquiry.

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Tawḥīdic Epistemology, Integration of Knowledge and Thought Leadership in the International Islamic University Malaysia

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Abstract

This essay examines the evolution of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) as a transformative project rooted in the integration of *Tawḥīdic* Epistemology (TE) and contemporary scientific inquiry and elaborates on what the TE means for research and thought leadership. It re-looks – albeit briefly – at the establishment of the IIUM. Initially conceived as a response to the "crisis of knowledge" within the Muslim *ummah*, IIUM has matured into a sophisticated institution that seeks to bridge the dichotomy between secular and revealed knowledge. Central to this analysis is the argument that Research Excellence at IIUM is intrinsically tied to the revitalization of *'ilm al-usūl* (the science of principles and foundations). Furthermore, this study posits that institutional reputation is a by-product of high-impact, ethically anchored research. By aligning its research agenda with the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and engaging in rigorous, trans-disciplinary dialogue, IIUM positions itself as a global leader in civilizational renewal. The paper concludes by affirming that the IIUM 2025/2026 strategic mandate to embed *tawḥīdic* principles into applied research represents a necessary evolution toward achieving both intellectual sovereignty and global academic prestige.

The Historical Evolution of IIUM: A Project of Intellectual and Civilizational Renewal

The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) is not merely an educational institution; it is the physical and intellectual manifestation of a modern movement to address the crisis of knowledge in the Muslim world. Its historical evolution is intrinsically linked to the global Islamic discourse on reform (*islāh*) and renewal (*tajdid*). In the intellectual dimension, the idea of reform called for a critical evaluation of the backward condition of the Muslims at the turn of the 20th century, suffering from decades, if not centuries, of colonial domination. What the IIUM represents manifests one approach to reform, i.e., calls for the need to benefit from both sources of knowledge – revelation and the universe – with the aid of reason. In 1983, when the IIUM was established, this 'integration of Islamic heritage and modern sciences based on the philosophy of tawhid' was put forward as the foundation of curriculum design. Later in the late 1990s, the Islamisation of Knowledge (IOK) became the central guiding agenda. By the early 2010s, this was repackaged as Integration of Knowledge, while in the early 2020s, under the current leadership, TE has been reasserted. In many ways, this takes us back to the original idea whereby *tawḥīd* becomes the explicit reference framework for all intellectual development in IIUM.

The Global Intellectual Context: The Crisis of Knowledge (1970s)

The impetus for IIUM's creation originated from a deep-seated intellectual crisis experienced across the Muslim *ummah* following centuries of intellectual stagnation and colonialism. This crisis was characterized by the bifurcation of knowledge into segregated "religious" and "secular" streams, leaving Muslim societies intellectually ill-equipped to engage with modernity. However, after gaining political independence after WWII, the Muslim *ummah* gradually started demanding indigenous solutions to their numerous development challenges. While some called for a "return to the glory of the past"– as all solutions were found in the *Qurán* and *Hadith*- others wished Muslim countries to embrace modernity and follow the path of the West in line with the modernization thesis that dominated the global intellectual and political economy of the 1950s and 1960s.

The mid-1970s witnessed a resurgence of religion, i.e., Islam, in many parts of the Muslim world. With the oil resources in many parts of the Middle East, funds were channelled to promote Islamic activities and organizations as part of overall da'wah efforts to spread Islam. Among others, Islamic economics and Islamic education were given attention.

- In 1975, the Islamic Development Bank was established in Jeddah with a focus on the overall economic development of the economies of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), now known as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.
- In 1976, the first International Conference of Islamic Economics was held in Makkah *al-Mukarramah* under the patronage of the late King Faisal. This Conference heralded the birth of contemporary Islamic economics and finance.
- The Makkah Conference (1977): The First World Conference on Muslim Education in Makkah was a pivotal moment. It officially recognized the intellectual malaise of the *ummah* and brought together leading Muslim scholars, notably Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, who formalized the concept of IOK. Both scholars viewed the secularization of knowledge as the primary sickness afflicting the *ummah*.

Among the outcomes of this historic Conference was a call to develop an alternative knowledge paradigm rooted in the *tawḥīdic* worldview. This project aimed to critically examine, re-evaluate, and ultimately integrate contemporary human sciences, arts, and technology with the eternal, normative guidance of the Islamic Revealed Knowledge. To materialise this vision, there was a need to have an Islamic University that was the champion of the IOK agenda.

The Founding Vision and Establishment of the IIUM (1982–1983)

The vision for IIUM was conceived within this global intellectual ferment but was realized through the political will of the government of Malaysia (two other Islamic Universities were established, the first was the International Islamic University Islamabad, and the Islamic University of Niger).

- The Idea of IIUM in Malaysia (1983): The idea was formally mooted on January 12, 1982, by the then-Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, during discussions about the future direction of Islamic education. This political endorsement gave the IOK project a crucial institutional laboratory for its implementation.
- The Working Paper: Various concepts of Islamic education and the Islamic University were proposed by numerous scholars over the previous decades, including during the 1977 Conference in Makkah. However, as far as the IIUM was concerned, an initial working paper was prepared by academics, including Mohd Kamal Hassan (who later served as its 3rd Rector), outlining a comprehensive institution that would integrate

Islamic values into all academic disciplines i.e. sciences, engineering, social sciences, law, etc. (it is important to note that an earlier paper modelled after the Al-Azhar University and other similar Islamic studies universities was not accepted).

- International Co-Sponsorship: Recognizing the university's global Islamic mission, the establishment of IIUM was deliberately made an international project. On May 20, 1983, IIUM received its "Establishment Order" from the King of Malaysia after an exchange of Diplomatic Notes of co-sponsorship with several Muslim governments and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The initial co-sponsors included Malaysia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Libya, the Maldives, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, who, until today, are represented on the Board of Governors of the IIUM.
- Legal Innovation: Due to its mandate to use English and Arabic as media of instruction and its commitment to attracting international students, which was initially restricted by Malaysian law, IIUM was initially incorporated under the Companies Act 1965. This facilitated its international character and its non-adherence to the National Language Act at the time, underscoring the founders' commitment to its global mission (Hassan, 2011).

The Formative Years and Conceptual Structuring (1983–1990s)

The initial phase was marked by the practical implementation of the TE/IOK philosophy through academic structuring.

- The First Intake (1983): The first academic session started on July 16, 1983, with a modest batch of 153 students. Initial faculties included the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Laws, areas of study where the secular-Islamic conflict was most pronounced and where the need for integrated frameworks was urgent. The Rectorship of the late Muhammad Abdul Rauf (1983–1987) provided a stable guiding hand to allow the IIUM to establish itself on firm, albeit cautious ground. The idea of an "IIUM" was new and quite different from other Islamic universities, including those of al-Azhar and Makkah and Madinah.
- The Centre for Fundamental Knowledge (CFK): What made the IIUM unique was the establishment of the CFK as the structural mechanism for integration. Its core function was to instil the foundational principles of *tawḥīdic* and Islamic ethics (*adab*) into every student, regardless of their specialization (e.g., Law, Engineering, Medicine), ensuring

all graduates embodied the qualities of *iman* (faith), '*ilm* (knowledge), and *akhlaq* (ethics).

- The Leadership of IOK Proponents: During the leadership of AbdulHamid A. Sulayman, the second Rector of IIUM (1988-1998), IIUM's vision and mission were made clearer. It was in this period that the IIUM led in its crucial role in disseminating the IOK concept, making it a criterion for academic life and focusing initial efforts on the humanities and social sciences. This period was characterized by "streamlining" the IOK vision, making the philosophy explicit and establishing its infrastructure.

Physical Expansion: AbdulHamid A. Sulayman was the architect of the current Gombak Campus, being involved in the transition from the temporary campus in Petaling Jaya to the purpose-built Gombak Campus in the 1990s, symbolizing the growth and consolidation of its mission. The campus, themed as the "Garden of Knowledge and Virtue" (*Taman Ilmu dan Budi*) a phrase given by the third Rector, Mohd Kamal Hassan (1999–2006), reflects the aspiration to create a holistic learning environment where physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth were all given due attention.

Evolution and Mainstreaming the TE and IOK Agenda (2000s–Present)

As the university matured, the challenge shifted from establishing the concept to mainstreaming its practical application across all disciplines, including the applied sciences.

- Holistic Integration: The growth of Kulliyyah's (Faculties) in fields like Engineering, Medicine, and Architecture solidified the commitment to applying TE beyond the social sciences, demanding innovative research and curricula in highly technical fields.
- From Theory to Application: Under later leadership, the focus evolved to practical implementation, using tools like *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* to provide a clear, objective framework for developing integrated curricula and research agendas. This approach emphasizes the transformation of the *ummah* through tangible output.
- Current Mandate (IIUM 2025/2026): Today, IIUM's historical mission is codified in its strategic plans, which emphasize Integration, Islamisation, Internationalization, and Comprehensive Excellence (IIICE). In the last couple of years, the IIUM vision has been rebranded as the need to work within TE in all its teaching, research, and co-curricular activities. The focus on innovative research is the contemporary expression of the historical IOK project, recognizing that only *tawḥīdic* guided innovation can

solve the complex, integrated crises of the modern Muslim world and to achieve its mission of *Ummatic* Excellence.

- The Role of Research in Institutional Identity and Reputation
  The transition toward "Mainstreaming the TE/IOK Agenda" serves a dual purpose: fulfilling the university's foundational mandate and establishing its global academic reputation. In the 21st century, a university's prestige is no longer tied solely to its history or even to its teaching alone, but to its research impact in advancing knowledge as well as its social impact. For IIUM, producing high-quality, peer-reviewed research within a *tawḥīdic* framework is the primary vehicle for proving that Islamic knowledge is not a relic of the past, but a competitive, sophisticated, and viable alternative to secular paradigms. By succeeding in rigorous research, IIUM secures its "brand" as the premier global hub for TE and the IOK attracting international funding, strategic partnerships, and elite scholars.

In summary, the history of IIUM is the history of a civilization project: a deliberate attempt to revive the classical Islamic intellectual tradition of knowledge unity and apply it to the complexities of the modern era, setting the stage for a transformative research agenda that is both ethically anchored and globally competitive.

Reputation as a Strategic Outcome of the IOK Agenda

Today, the institutional maturity of IIUM is defined by its strategic shift from conceptual establishment to mainstreaming the TE/IOK agenda. In the current academic climate, a university's reputation is derived from its capacity to produce original, high-impact research that commands global attention.

By codifying its mission through the IIICE (Integration, Islamisation, Internationalisation, and Comprehensive Excellence) framework– currently represented by the phrase *Ummatic* Excellence - IIUM is aiming to transition from an "educational project" into a global thought leader. The university's strategic research focus on innovative, *tawḥīdic*-guided solutions– ranging from sustainable finance to climate ethics demonstrates that TE/IOK is not merely a philosophical framework but a sophisticated, research-ready paradigm that enhances the university's status on the world stage.

Conclusion: Research as the Gateway to Global Leadership

Ultimately, the pursuit of Research Excellence at IIUM is a quest for Intellectual Sovereignty. A university that does not produce original research is destined to be a consumer of others' ideas. For IIUM to fulfil its role as a "Garden of Knowledge and Virtue", it must be a producer of knowledge that commands respect in both the East and the West.

The strategic initiatives of IIUM 2025/2026 recognize that research is the ultimate engine of reputation. By rewarding TE-aligned research and building capacity in *tawḥīdic* methodology, IIUM is not just educating students; it is broadcasting a powerful message to the world: that a God-centred epistemology is the most robust foundation for solving the complex crises of the modern era.

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