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Integrating social sciences with the Qur'an in the context of sermon text writing

Nurida M. Rahma, S.AP., M.IR.
National Research and Innovation Agency
nuridabrin@gmail.com

Siti Hanifa Azanda, S.I.A., M.Si.
National Research and Innovation Agency
sitihanifaazanda@gmail.com

Galih B. Yogaswara, S.Sos., MPP
National Research and Innovation Agency
galioo7@brin.go.id

Abstract

This study aims to examine the integration of social sciences with the Qur'an in the context of composing sermon texts. This integration is highly relevant considering the essential role of religion in shaping societal values and the challenges of harmonizing religious principles with contemporary scientific developments. Employing a qualitative approach through literature review and interviews, the study identifies a five-stage process for effective integration: (1) understanding the Qur'an and Hadith as primary sources; (2) mastering modern scientific disciplines; (3) analyzing social phenomena and issues; (4) applying principles and methods of epistemological interaction between science and the Qur'an; and (5) ensuring the preacher's integrity, academic quality, and competence. Findings indicate that incorporating social science perspectives in sermon writing enriches religious discourse, aligns it with present-day social realities, and enhances its impact on Muslim audiences. This paper emphasizes the importance of integrating religious knowledge and scientific insight in delivering sermons that are not only doctrinally sound but also contextually relevant and socially transformative.

Keywords: integration; social sciences; Qur'an; sermons; religious preaching

INTRODUCTION

Religion and science are inherently inseparable. Historically, Christianity once viewed science as a threat. Only after the Galileo Galilei era did the Catholic Church begin to reconcile with scientific thought and adopt a more complementary approach. A similar historical episode also occurred within Islamic civilization. Although Islam never explicitly opposed scientific inquiry or scholarly thought, there were times when books written by Muslim thinkers were destroyed by fellow Muslims themselves.

This historical distortion has perpetuated a myth in educational narratives that ignores the scientific achievements of Muslim scholars during the medieval period. These contributions, long buried, began to be recognized only in the early 2000s, revealing Islam's foundational influence on Western science. Ehsan Masood, in his book *Science & Islam*, highlights the contributions of several Muslim scientists to the fields of natural sciences and technology. For instance, Ibn al-Nafis, a physician in Cairo, discovered pulmonary blood circulation in the 13th century. Abbas Ibn Firnas, an

Andalusian engineer, formulated early flight theories and is believed to have conducted successful flight experiments six centuries before Leonardo da Vinci designed his famous ornithopter. Jabir Ibn Hayyan (Geber) in Kufa, Iraq, laid the foundations of modern chemistry nearly 900 years before Boyle.

Masood also explains that many foundational ideas in modern science were influenced by Islamic scholars. George Saliba from Columbia University, in *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*, illustrates how Nicolaus Copernicus built on Islamic astronomy in forming his heliocentric theory. The origins of algebra, critical for solving unknown quantities in science, are traced to 9th-century Baghdad and the works of al-Khwarizmi. The quadratic equations developed by poet-scientist Omar Khayyam, and the groundbreaking theories in optics by Hassan Ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen), further solidify Islam's scientific legacy.

Muslim scholars also pioneered the early development of the social sciences, with Ibn Khaldun being a central figure. A 14th-century North African philosopher, Ibn Khaldun authored *al-Muqaddimah*, which is widely regarded as the foundational text of sociology. These facts confirm a strong and undeniable connection between the Qur'an—as the Muslims' divine guidebook—and scientific knowledge.

In alignment with this historical relationship, sermons serve as an effective medium for disseminating religious awareness and knowledge to society. For many Muslims, particularly those with limited access to formal education, sermons may be the only available source of learning (Hasan, 2023). This realization has motivated the authors to conduct this study entitled *Integrating Social Sciences with the Qur'an in the Context of Sermon Text Writing*. This paper seeks to explore the stages involved in crafting sermon texts that integrate Islamic teachings with social science perspectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Epistemological Interaction and the Integration of Social Sciences with the Qur'an

The rapid advancement of modern science, alongside growing human crises such as environmental degradation and moral decline, has sparked significant debate within Muslim communities. Some argue that modern science itself is the root of these issues. As a result, three major models of epistemological interaction between Islam and science have emerged: Islamization of knowledge, scientific Islamization (saintification), and integrative-interconnected knowledge (Islamic science) (Purwanto, 2015; Khoirudin, 2017).

Prominent proponents of the Islamization of knowledge include Ismail Raji al-Faruqi and Seyyed Naquib al-Attas. Al-Faruqi proposed integrating Islamic values into all academic disciplines, believing that modern scientific developments have negatively impacted Muslim societies. He introduced a 12-step technical framework for Islamizing knowledge, including mastering modern disciplines, analyzing Islamic intellectual heritage, conducting critical assessments, and rewriting knowledge within an Islamic framework (Haryanti & Amril; Wathoni).

Seyyed Naquib al-Attas emphasized that Islamization means liberating knowledge from myth, superstition, and secular Western influences, restoring it in line with Islamic worldview (Khoirudin, 2017; Wathoni). Similarly, Anwar Mujahidin (2013) argued for returning knowledge to its theological roots—*tauhid*, the Qur'an, and Sunnah—rather than uncritically adopting external methodologies.

In contrast, Nidhal Guessoum critiques al-Faruqi's approach and advocates a "quantum approach" to integration. According to Guessoum (Mubarok & Mansur, 2023), science, philosophy, and religion are non-contradictory—each with divine origin: revelation (*āyāt qauliyyah*), the universe (*kawniyyah*), and reason (*'aql*) respectively. He proposes a multi-layered interpretation of Qur'anic verses to accommodate diverse levels of reasoning, ultimately enriching Islamic intellectual tradition (Zulfis, 2019).

Scientific Islamization and the Integrative Knowledge Model

Kuntowijoyo (2004) promoted "scientific Islamization" rather than Islamization of science, emphasizing the application of the Qur'an and Sunnah to empirical and social realities. Zulfis (2019) explains that Kuntowijoyo envisioned Islamic knowledge as contextual and responsive to ecological and societal dynamics.

The third model—Islamic science or integrative knowledge—is grounded in the works of Agus Purwanto and M. Amin Abdullah. In this paradigm, science is constructed upon the foundational texts of Islam: the Qur'an and Sunnah. Amin Abdullah's "spider-web epistemology" illustrates a dynamic network connecting Islamic disciplines with modern sciences through integrative-interconnective frameworks (Yulanda; Wathoni).

Wardah Hanafie Das, Abdul Halik, and Sardi (2024) describe practical methods for integrating Islam and science: (1) using the Qur'an and Hadith as primary sources of knowledge; (2) expanding Islamic curriculum and avoiding the science-religion dichotomy; (3) nurturing tech-savvy religious individuals; and (4) identifying Qur'anic verses relevant to scientific inquiry.

Sermon and Friday Preaching as Platforms for Integration

Preaching (*da'wah*) serves as a means of inviting people to live according to Islamic teachings, whether through speech, writing, exemplary behavior, or even socioeconomic empowerment (Fahrurrozi, Faizah, & Kadri, 2009; Zaini, 2013). Preachers utilize various platforms—pulpits, printed media, and digital channels—to deliver their messages.

Zaini (2013) outlines key considerations for sermon topics: alignment with the preacher's expertise, relevance to the audience, scope clarity, and contextual appropriateness. He also provides eight essential criteria for sermon delivery, such as reliance on verified scriptural sources, prioritization of core Islamic values over political content, and avoidance of sectarian disputes or sensational current events.

Professionalism in preaching requires not only eloquence but also ethical integrity, scriptural competence, emotional intelligence, and social awareness. The Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia) emphasizes two core requirements for preachers: integrity and competence. These include personal spirituality, eloquence, scholarly capability, physical and economic stability, and interpersonal skills. Furthermore, preachers must demonstrate mastery in communication (*tabligh*), guidance (*irshād*), management (*tadbīr*), community engagement (*muṭawwir*), and mentorship (*murabbi*).

As Houton (in Fahrurrozi et al., 2009) states, professionalism entails systematic expertise, demonstrable skills, lifelong commitment, evaluable performance, and the capacity to develop scientific techniques grounded in experience. Preachers must

embody these standards to effectively deliver religious messages within evolving sociocultural landscapes.

RESEARCH METHOD

According to Staines, Hoffstaedter, and Binnie (2023), the scientific method comprises a systematic sequence of steps undertaken by scholars to construct and verify scientific knowledge. These steps include observation, formulating research questions, hypothesizing, conducting experiments, analyzing data, and drawing conclusions. Through observation, researchers examine their surroundings to gain deeper understanding. This is followed by formulating philosophical questions, developing hypotheses based on theoretical assumptions, and testing these hypotheses through empirical research. The gathered data are then analyzed, culminating in scientifically grounded conclusions.

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing interviews as the primary data collection method. Informants were selected based on specific criteria: having formal status as researchers with expertise in social sciences and possessing experience in delivering sermons. More specifically, the chosen informants have preached on themes that integrate the Qur'an with social science perspectives.

Audio recordings of the interviews were made, and transcripts were generated using artificial intelligence-based transcription tools. The resulting transcripts were then analyzed using triangulation techniques to ensure the credibility and validity of the findings.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Integration of Science and Religion in the Islamic Context

Various literature studies reveal that within the Islamic context—particularly in Indonesia—the relationship between science and religion tends to favor integration rather than opposition (Zulfis, 2019). This integration is reflected in both academic development and religious practices, including curricula at Islamic educational institutions. Different Islamic universities in Indonesia employ diverse terminologies and models for this integration. For instance, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta uses the term "scientific reintegration," UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta applies the "integration-interconnection" model symbolized by a spider-web epistemology, and UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang adopts the "tree of knowledge" integration model.

Zulfis notes that at least 17 State Islamic Universities (UINs) have embraced concepts of Islamic science or scientific integration, albeit with different terminologies. In contrast, Malaysia predominantly adopts the Islamization of science approach, inspired by figures such as al-Faruqi, Naquib al-Attas, and Osman Bakar.

Zulfis (2019) further asserts that the integration of science extends beyond natural sciences to include the social sciences and humanities. This integration requires dialogical interaction that fosters mutual understanding of the foundational principles of both science and Islam. Such an approach enriches both disciplines and encourages harmony between modern knowledge and Islamic teachings.

Al-Faruqi's model of knowledge integration emphasizes a series of steps that culminate in disseminating Islamized knowledge. Within academic contexts, this dissemination can be realized through teaching and curriculum development. In non-

academic settings, such as religious outreach, it may take the form of sermons or Friday preaching.

Sermons as a Medium for Social Science Integration

To serve this purpose, preachers need structured sermon texts that reflect the integration of the Qur'an with social sciences. This requires a deliberate methodology in sermon composition—one that connects Islamic teachings to the socio-cultural realities of contemporary life.

“Advice is personal. But if that is the only thing being delivered by preachers, the audience may listen during the sermon. However, once they return to social environments shaped by structural pressure, they struggle to stay consistent,” (Interview excerpt with informant).

The practices described by the informant align with the integration framework proposed by Wardah Hanafie Das, Abdul Halik, and Sardi (2024), which emphasizes contextualizing religious teachings—drawn from the Qur'an and Hadith—within the lived experiences of society.

“For instance, consider the regulations on debt and financial transactions. These are covered in Surah al-Baqarah, verses 282 and 283. That’s why I advocate for a more holistic approach among both preachers and the public. Islam does, indeed, address social structures. The verse I used in that sermon was al-Baqarah 283, the longest verse in the Qur'an. In the Saudi mushaf, an entire page is devoted to it. It instructs the believers to record deferred transactions, bring in two male witnesses, or one man and two women if two men are unavailable. It’s very detailed,” (Interview excerpt with informant).

Sermon preparation should thus begin with these steps: (1) using the Qur'an and Hadith as sources of knowledge, (2) expanding Islamic material while avoiding dichotomies between religious and secular sciences, (3) fostering technologically literate religious figures, and (4) tracing Qur'anic verses relevant to scientific themes.

Understanding Social Sciences through the Lens of Islamic Philosophy

Although often perceived as a Western construct, social science has roots that can be traced back to Eastern traditions, particularly within Islamic intellectual heritage. Western scholars themselves acknowledge Ibn Khaldun as the “father of sociology.” In his seminal work *al-Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun systematically laid out theories on societal dynamics and civilization, thus becoming a foundational figure in the development of social science. His contributions have been widely recognized and adopted by Western academia.

However, at certain points in Islamic history, philosophical inquiry was met with suspicion and even condemnation. Some Muslim communities went so far as to burn the works of Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Sina, and Ibn 'Arabi. These events, which occurred between 976–1009 CE, reflected a tension between theological orthodoxy and philosophical reasoning. Even today, there are strands within the Muslim world that resist philosophical discourse, dismissing it as un-Islamic or overly influenced by the West.

Yet, philosophy forms the root of all scientific inquiry and should not be divorced from knowledge production. Social sciences, in particular, are grounded in dialectical reasoning—a process that entails proposing a thesis, engaging in critical skepticism, and

testing claims through rational evaluation. Such epistemological skepticism aligns with Qur'anic imperatives to reflect, question, and investigate.

Moreover, the Qur'an itself addresses numerous social realities relevant to human life. It provides guidance on issues such as debt, criminal justice, and ethical behavior, all of which form the core of social science inquiry. The Qur'an thus serves as a normative foundation upon which social scientific thought can be constructed. Philosophy, as the intellectual root, connects this foundation to the broader realm of human understanding, and social science emerges from this continuum.

Consequently, the integration of social science and the Qur'an is not only plausible but essential. Social science should be informed by, and aligned with, the moral and ethical messages conveyed through Qur'anic revelation.

Individual Emphasis in Religious Sermons

It is common for religious sermons delivered by scholars or preachers to place a heavy emphasis on individual responsibility. For instance, sermons often focus on admonishing individuals for failing to give charity or for engaging in sinful acts such as *zinā* (fornication), which are sometimes portrayed as resulting solely from personal failure—particularly among women. These messages frequently rely on fear-based narratives about divine punishment in the afterlife, such as the torment of hell.

However, individuals do not exist in a vacuum—they are shaped by the social systems in which they live. A proper understanding of these systems is crucial for composing sermons that are both contextually relevant and socially insightful. Integrating knowledge from the social sciences can help preachers craft messages that are more constructive and resonate with the actual challenges faced by their audiences.

“Muslims commit corruption, too. I saw it myself. Corruption, criminal acts—these are often perpetrated by Muslims as well. We are the majority population, after all. So when corruption happens, it often involves Muslims. The sermons say it’s wrong, the religious advice says it’s forbidden, yet these acts still occur. So I started asking: what’s wrong with these sermons? Are they failing to convey the message?” (Interview excerpt with informant).

The implication is clear: sermons must go beyond individual moral appeals and address the systemic issues that shape human behavior. For instance, corruption in Indonesia—a predominantly Muslim country—remains pervasive. It is not uncommon for convicted corrupt officials to appear in court wearing religious attire, such as *peci* for men and *hijāb* for women, as if symbolically seeking forgiveness. But the fact that such acts occur despite repeated religious warnings suggests a disconnect between sermon content and social reality.

“Human beings exist within a social system. Without sufficient knowledge of social dynamics—like understanding whether social realities are shaped more by individual agents or by structural forces—it’s hard to explain these phenomena. And in sociology, that debate has been ongoing: is social reality driven by agents or by structure?” (Interview excerpt with informant).

In many cases, individuals who enter corrupt environments eventually succumb to systemic pressure. At first, they may resist. But over time, repeated exposure and normalization of unethical practices lead them to compromise. This nuance is often overlooked in religious sermons, which tend to address moral failings at the individual level without considering the underlying social structures that sustain them.

*“They keep talking about individuals: increase your *taqwā*, fear hellfire, avoid immorality. It’s all individualistic. But the moment people return to society—back to their environments—they face structural pressures that make it hard to uphold those values.” (Interview excerpt with informant).*

Professionalism in Preaching

“Muslims commit corruption, too. I’ve seen it. Those who engage in corruption and crime are Muslims as well. We’re the majority, right? So it’s often Muslims committing these wrongdoings, even though sermons explicitly prohibit them. That made me wonder: is something wrong with the way sermons are delivered?” (Interview excerpt with informant).

From this testimony, it becomes clear that the effectiveness of religious sermons relies heavily on the integrity and competence of the preacher. Professionalism in preaching is not merely about public speaking ability—it encompasses ethical grounding, knowledge of both religious texts and contemporary issues, and the capacity to engage audiences meaningfully.

“I attended a madrasah as a child, so I had some religious foundation. But all my formal education after that was in secular schools, even in the Netherlands. And I still participated in Qur’anic study circles while abroad. So I’ve seen both worlds. And really, there should be no contradiction between religious and secular knowledge. If a contradiction appears, it’s probably because the worldly knowledge is flawed. We have to acknowledge that.” (Interview excerpt with informant).

This perspective reflects a balanced integration of traditional Islamic knowledge and modern education. It demonstrates the importance of comprehensive intellectual preparation for preachers who wish to address contemporary issues in a manner that is both theologically sound and socially relevant.

“Islamic civilization once flourished in scientific endeavors. But now, we’ve stalled in modern science. If the Islamic world hadn’t closed itself off from philosophy—and, by extension, from social and natural sciences—we would be far more advanced. Even the West acknowledges that they built their foundations on our works. They translated the writings of Khaldun, Ibn Sina, and others.” (Interview excerpt with informant).

Integrating Social Sciences and the Qur'an in Sermon Texts

The interview excerpts affirm that the informant possesses a strong understanding of modern knowledge, the Qur'an, and Hadith—and actively utilizes Islamic sources to inform their academic and religious thinking. They embody the integration of modern science, Islamic texts, and philosophical reasoning.

This study finds that writing sermon texts that effectively integrate social sciences with the Qur'an depends on the preacher's ability to synthesize several domains of knowledge. A preacher can successfully construct an integrated sermon when they:

1. Comprehend the Qur'an and Hadith as primary sources of guidance;
2. Possess mastery over modern scientific disciplines;
3. Understand the dynamics of social phenomena and issues;
4. Apply principles and methods of interdisciplinary interaction between religious and scientific knowledge; and

5. Uphold high standards of integrity, quality, and professional competence.

CONCLUSION

The existence of knowledge cannot be separated from the guidance provided by the Qur'an. Human social life is governed by the Qur'an, which outlines what is permissible and prohibited for individuals within a given society. Therefore, social sciences—which examine human behavior within social structures—are inherently rooted in the ethical and normative framework of the Qur'an.

In Indonesia, religious leaders often deliver sermons that focus primarily on individual morality rather than addressing the broader structural dimensions of Islamic teachings as they manifest in society. As a result, the systemic causes of social problems—such as corruption—are often overlooked in favor of moralistic appeals directed at individuals.

This study highlights the importance of composing and preparing sermon texts with careful consideration, especially when aiming to integrate the Qur'an with social scientific perspectives. The quality of sermon texts ultimately depends on the preacher's level of professionalism and capacity for integration.

1. A preacher can successfully integrate social sciences with the Qur'an in sermon texts if they possess the following five competencies:
2. A sound understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith as foundational sources;
3. Proficiency in modern scientific disciplines;
4. Awareness of contemporary social phenomena and challenges;
5. Familiarity with the principles and methods of epistemological interaction between science and religion; and
6. Strong integrity, scholarly quality, and professional competence as a *dā'i* (preacher).

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