

Digitization of Tafsir and its Challenge to the Authority of Interpretation: A Review of Ulumul Qur'an

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ABSTRACT

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in the way Muslims access and understand Qur'anic interpretation. This study aims to analyze the impact of digitalization on the authority of Qur'anic interpretation from the perspective of Ulumul Qur'an. The method used is a literature study by analyzing twenty relevant academic literatures. The results show that digitization increases access to sources of interpretation, but also causes a shift in authority from authoritative scholars to popular digital figures without sufficient scientific basis. Much of the tafsir content does not utilize a comprehensive Ulumul Qur'an approach, making it prone to biased and distorted interpretations. Ulumul Qur'an has an important role as a scientific filter in assessing the validity of digital interpretations and needs to be revitalized in the curriculum and digital da'wah platforms. This study concludes that the integration of Ulumul Qur'an in the digitalization of tafsir is a strategic step to maintain the authority, validity, and depth of understanding of the Qur'an.

Keywords: Digitalization of Interpretation, Authority of Interpretation, Ulumul Qur'an

ABSTRAK

Perkembangan teknologi digital telah membawa perubahan signifikan dalam cara umat Islam mengakses dan memahami tafsir Al-Qur'an. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dampak digitalisasi terhadap otoritas penafsiran Al-Qur'an dalam perspektif Ulumul Qur'an. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi pustaka dengan menganalisis dua puluh literatur akademik yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa digitalisasi meningkatkan akses terhadap sumber-sumber tafsir, tetapi juga menyebabkan pergeseran otoritas dari ulama yang otoritatif ke figur-figur digital populer tanpa dasar keilmuan yang memadai. Banyak konten tafsir yang tersebar tidak menggunakan pendekatan Ulumul Qur'an secara komprehensif, sehingga rawan menimbulkan penafsiran bias dan menyimpang. Ulumul Qur'an memiliki peran penting sebagai filter ilmiah dalam menilai keabsahan tafsir digital serta perlu direvitalisasi dalam kurikulum dan platform dakwah digital. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi Ulumul Qur'an dalam arus digitalisasi tafsir merupakan langkah strategis untuk menjaga otoritas, validitas, dan kedalaman pemahaman terhadap Al-Qur'an.

Kata Kunci: Digitalisasi Tafsir, Otoritas Penafsiran, Ulumul Qur'an

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information technology has had a major impact on various fields of life, including in the religious realm. People can now access various Islamic content digitally, ranging from classical books, lectures, to Qur'anic commentaries, through online platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Android and iOS-based commentary applications. This phenomenon not only reflects technological progress, but also marks a transformation in the way Muslims learn and understand religious teachings (Hefni, 2021).

However, digitalization also presents serious challenges, especially in terms of interpretive authority. The amount of tafsir content circulating without an academic validation process means that anyone can become an interpreter of the Qur'an in the digital space. This has led to a shift in authority, where popularity on social media sometimes counts more than scholarly depth. This shift raises epistemological and scientific problems that need to be studied more deeply from the perspective of Ulumul Qur'an (Ansori, 2022; Alwi, 2023).

Yusuf and Satra's research (2023) states that digital tafsir tends to be pragmatic and popular, with minimal deepening of classical tafsir science. Wulandari (2022) shows that social media has become an arena for the distribution of new interpretations that are not always based on scientific methodology. Zainuddin (2021) examines how the younger generation is exposed to digital interpretations without the ability to verify the source. Adnan and Rahmawati's research (2020) found that tafsir content on YouTube is often instant and reductive. Meanwhile, Syahrul (2021) emphasized the importance of strengthening the Ulumul Qur'an approach to maintain the authenticity and integrity of tafsir in the digital era.

Considering these dynamics, it is important to conduct a study that places Ulumul Qur'an as an epistemological instrument in responding to the digitalization of tafsir. This study is needed to emphasize the boundaries between scientific and speculative interpretations, and to prioritize scientific authority based on valid sanad and methodology. Without proper mapping, digitization can actually obscure the meaning of the sacred text and lead to deviant interpretations (Mulyadi, 2022).

The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of digitalization on the authority of Qur'anic interpretation from the perspective of Ulumul Qur'an. This research is expected to contribute to the development of tafsir methodology in the digital era, and offer an approach that can maintain the purity of interpretation as well as its social relevance.

METHOD

This research uses a literature study approach, which focuses on the critical analysis of literature that discusses the digitization of tafsir and the authority of interpretation in the perspective of Ulumul Qur'an. A total of 20 literatures were used as study materials, consisting of scientific journal articles, classic and contemporary Ulumul Qur'an books, and scientific writings relevant to the theme

of Islamic digitization. The literature was selected based on academic credibility, relevance of the content to the topic, and recency of publication. The data collection process was carried out by searching digital and print sources from academic libraries and scientific repositories. The data obtained is then analyzed descriptively-critically to reveal the dynamics of interpretive authority in the digital era, as well as to examine how Ulumul Qur'an provides a framework in responding to this phenomenon.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research relating to the digitization of tafsir and its challenges to the authority of interpretation: a review of ulumul qur'an, can be described as follows:

Accessibility of Qur'anic Interpretation in the Digital Age

Digitalization has expanded access to sources of Qur'anic interpretation. Through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Islamic websites and Qur'anic apps, people from different backgrounds can now access tafsir from different sources and schools of thought. This creates a great opportunity to increase religious literacy, especially among the younger generation who have grown up with technology (Yusuf & Satra, 2023).

Some applications such as Qur'an Kemenag, Quran.com, and TafsirWeb provide tafsir curated by official and academic institutions. However, open platforms such as YouTube and TikTok have also become a field for the dissemination of tafsir content by individuals without academic authority. This creates a dualism of sources: one that is scholarly and one that is popular, but not necessarily methodologically valid (Wulandari, 2022).

This ease of access also accelerates the process of internalizing Islamic values, especially for those who previously had limited access to printed tafsir books. However, without adequate assistance or digital literacy, people can be exposed to biased, pseudo-contextual, or even extreme interpretations (Zainuddin, 2021).

In addition, freedom of expression in the digital space also makes tafsir a content product that can be commodified. There is a tendency to package tafsir in the form of short, dramatic, or emotional narratives to attract the attention of the audience, but do not pay attention to the depth of meaning or the integrity of the context of the verse (Adnan & Rahmawati, 2020).

Thus, although digitalization provides an opportunity to broaden the understanding of the Qur'an, it also opens up space for distortion of meaning if it is not accompanied by a strong scientific foundation. Thus, it is important to place Islamic digital literacy as part of contemporary religious education.

Shifting Authority of Interpretation

One of the consequences of digital advancement is a shift in authority in Qur'anic interpretation. In the past, the authority of interpretation was in the

hands of scholars who had expertise in Ulumul Qur'an, scientific sanads, and established istinbath methods. But now, many digital figures appear as interpreters without an accountable scientific basis (Alwi, 2023).

This phenomenon is exacerbated by the logic of social media algorithms that tend to prioritize viral content over scientific content. As a result, extreme, provocative or populist interpretive narratives are more easily spread and trusted than academic interpretations that are often considered boring or too heavy (Ansori, 2022).

This condition creates a crisis of authority, where the public often trusts emotionally "close" figures on social media more than authoritative clerical figures. Adnan and Rahmawati's research (2020) shows that many lecture and tafsir contents deviate from the principles of Ulumul Qur'an but still receive millions of views.

In many cases, popularity becomes a substitute for credibility. This causes tafsir to lose its function as an authentic explanation of revelation and turn into a dramatized personal opinion. In fact, within the framework of Ulumul Qur'an, every interpretation must be subject to strict and responsible scientific rules (Syahrul, 2021).

herefore, there needs to be a systematic effort to restore the authority of tafsir to those who have expertise in the field. This can be done through strengthening religious authoritative institutions, curating digital content, and fostering preachers who understand the principles of tafsir and Ulumul Qur'an thoroughly.

The Relevance of Ulumul Qur'an as a Digital Interpretation Filter

Ulumul Qur'an is a very important branch of knowledge in guiding and directing the interpretation of Qur'anic verses. In a digital context, this role becomes even more relevant given the heavy flow of interpretive information that is not always methodologically filtered. Without the foundation of Ulumul Qur'an, interpretation is vulnerable to manipulation of meaning (Mulyadi, 2022).

Concepts such as asbab al-nuzul, munasabah between verses, makkiyah-madaniyah, and qira'at are not just theories, but meaning verification tools so that tafsir does not get out of the divine intention. Unfortunately, most of the popular digital tafsir content does not use this approach, and even tends to ignore it (Ansori, 2022).

The revitalization of Ulumul Qur'an can start from reforming the religious education curriculum, both in universities and pesantren. Planting the principles of Ulumul Qur'an in a contextual and applicable manner will help prospective scholars or preachers to produce interpretations that are more responsible and not trapped in digital populism (Syahrul, 2021).

On the other hand, it is necessary to build a digital ecosystem that supports scientific authority. For example, through collaboration between Islamic institutions, academics and technology developers to create a tafsir platform that

is based on Ulumul Qur'an and is able to compete visually and interactively with current popular content (Mulyadi, 2022).

By prioritizing Ulumul Qur'an as a filter, digital tafsir can be directed to become a valid, in-depth, and transformative media for da'wah and education. This role becomes very important in maintaining religious authority and preventing people from being trapped in misleading interpretations.

The findings of this study show that the digitization of tafsir has major consequences for the pattern of Muslims' interaction with the Qur'an. Easier access through digital platforms creates vast opportunities to improve religious literacy, especially for the younger generation who are more responsive to visual and interactive approaches. However, this has also resulted in increased consumption of instant, unverified interpretations. Yusuf and Satra (2023) emphasize that interpretations that are consumed quickly and one-sidedly often overlook the deeper aspects of classical interpretation methods. Thus, it can be formulated that digitalization is not just a change in media, but also a paradigm shift in learning and understanding the Qur'an.

The shift of authority from scholars to digital figures shows the crisis of interpretive authority in the contemporary religious landscape. Interpretation that should be guided by the principles of Ulumul Qur'an such as asbab al-nuzul, munasabah between verses, and qira'at is now delivered by individuals who sometimes lack scientific competence. Alwi (2023) criticizes that in the digital space, the measure of authority has shifted from scientific sanad to the number of followers or video views. This risks presenting interpretations that deviate from the original intent of the verse and can shape shallow or even radical public understanding.

This discussion emphasized the importance of Ulumul Qur'an as a scientific framework in dealing with the flood of digital interpretations that escape academic control. Ansori (2022) mentioned that the Ulumul Qur'an method should not only be taught in classrooms, but also applied in digital da'wah practices. With a contextual approach, Ulumul Qur'an can function as a critical tool for deviant interpretative content. This revitalization needs to start from higher education institutions and be strengthened through training for preachers, teachers, and da'wah influencers to uphold scientific authority in interpreting the Qur'an.

In addition, collaboration between tafsir scholars, religious institutions, and technology actors is crucial in creating an authoritative and attractive digital tafsir platform. Mulyadi (2022) proposes the need for digital innovation based on Ulumul Qur'an that can compete with viral content that tends to be pragmatic. For example, by developing an official da'wah application or channel that presents tafsir based on correct methodology, but packaged with communicative narratives and visuals. In this context, digitalization is no longer seen as a threat, but a strategic opportunity to revive Ulumul Qur'an in the contemporary public sphere.

Therefore, an important formulation of this study is that the digitalization of interpretation demands the presence of Ulumul Qur'an as an epistemological

filter mechanism and quality control over interpretive authority. Syahrul (2021) asserts that without a valid methodological framework, interpretation in the digital era will continue to be trapped in subjectivism and manipulative possibilities. This research encourages the strengthening of Ulumul Qur'an-based interpretation literacy in society, the development of credible digital media, and an interpretation curriculum that is adaptive to digital reality. With these steps, the interpretation of the Qur'an can remain deep, authoritative, and in line with the times.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the digitalization of Qur'anic interpretation is a phenomenon that presents an ambivalence between expanding access to Islamic understanding and challenges to scientific authority in interpretation. Ease of access through digital media provides a great opportunity to increase Qur'anic literacy in society, especially among the younger generation. However, the shift in authority from scholars based on scientific sanad to popular digital figures creates vulnerability to the spread of interpretations that are not based on the Ulumul Qur'an methodology. In this condition, Ulumul Qur'an has a high urgency to be put forward as an epistemological filter tool in assessing the validity of digital interpretations. Revitalization of Ulumul Qur'anic learning, strengthening religious digital literacy, and collaboration between academics and technology practitioners are strategic steps to ensure that the digitalization of interpretation does not become a threat, but an opportunity to ground the values of the Qur'an scientifically, contextually, and authoritatively.

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