

METHODOLOGICAL TENSIONS IN QURANIC EXEGESIS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TAHLILI AND MAUDHU'I IN HIGHER ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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Abstract: *The growing complexity of contemporary Islamic issues demands a rigorous understanding of Quranic interpretation methodologies, making a critical evaluation of existing tafsir approaches both timely and necessary (Urgency). This study aims to conduct a systematic comparative analysis of the Tahlili (analytical) and Maudhu'i (thematic) methods in Quranic exegesis (Research Objective). The focus of this research encompasses the definitions, historical development, key characteristics, as well as the inherent strengths and limitations of each method (Research Focus). Employing a qualitative descriptive methodology through a systematic literature review of peer-reviewed journals, scholarly books, and academic databases in Islamic studies (Research Method), this study finds that the Tahlili method provides meticulous verse-by-verse analysis with strong linguistic and contextual grounding, while the Maudhu'i method offers a holistic thematic framework that is particularly effective for addressing modern socio-religious challenges. Critically, the study identifies that the Tahlili method risks fragmentation in thematic understanding, whereas the Maudhu'i method risks decontextualizing individual verses if applied without sufficient care (Research Results). These findings underscore the complementary nature of both methods and suggest that an integrative approach may yield a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of Quranic teachings.*

Keywords: *Quranic exegesis, Tahlili approach, Maudhu'i approach, comparative analysis, Islamic studies, thematic interpretation*

INTRODUCTION

The Al-Qur'an serves as the primary source of guidance in Islam, and its interpretation (tafsir) has been a central intellectual endeavor throughout Islamic history¹. Among the numerous methodological approaches developed by scholars,² the Tahlili (analytical) and Maudhu'i (thematic) methods stand as the two most widely adopted frameworks in contemporary Quranic studies³. This research focuses on a systematic comparative analysis of these two methods as the primary object of investigation, examining their definitions, historical trajectories, characteristics, strengths, and limitations⁴.

¹ Andi Marwati and Idil Hamzah, "THE HISTORY AND DYNAMICS OF TAFSIR IN THE TABI'IN ERA," *TAFASIR: Journal of Quranic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2024): 98–114.

² Wikipedia, "Tafsir," 2025, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tafsir>.

³ Juhrah M Arib and Sabil Mokodenseho, "The Tahlili Method in the Interpretation of the Qur'ān," *MUSHAF JOURNAL: Jurnal Ilmu Al Quran Dan Hadis* 3 (2023): 167–82.

⁴ Vera Diana Yulita, Andi Abd Muis, and Nurully Kesuma Ningrum, "Tafsir Methods in the Quran" 7, no. 2 (2025): 626–31, <https://doi.org/10.56338/ijhess.v7i2.5552>.

The significance of this research is underscored by the growing volume of tafsir scholarship worldwide⁵. A bibliometric review of Islamic studies journals between 2000 and 2024 reveals a marked increase in publications utilizing thematic (Maudhu'i) interpretation, particularly in addressing contemporary issues such as social justice, gender, and environmental ethics.⁶ Despite this proliferation, the majority of existing comparative studies focus narrowly on either definitional distinctions or historical development, without critically evaluating the methodological implications for modern Quranic scholarship. This study addresses that gap by offering an integrated critical evaluation that encompasses both classical and contemporary dimensions a novelty that distinguishes it from prior works.

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In the contemporary era, Muslim scholars and educators face increasing demands to provide Quranic-based responses to complex modern challenges, including issues of pluralism, bioethics, digital governance, and social inequality. The selection of an appropriate tafsir methodology directly determines the scope, depth, and applicability of the resulting interpretation. However, many practitioners and students of Islamic studies lack a clear, structured understanding of the comparative strengths and limitations of the Tahlili and Maudhu'i methods, leading to inconsistent methodological choices in both academic research and educational practice.⁸

This methodological ambiguity constitutes the core research problem. While the Tahlili method offers precision in verse-level analysis, it is less efficient for thematic inquiry a

⁵ N Gafoordeen, "The Method of Qura'nic Interpretation – Historical Perspective," *Journal of Education and Practice* 8, no. 35 (2017): 43–45.

⁶ Marwati and Hamzah, "THE HISTORY AND DYNAMICS OF TAFSIR IN THE TABI'IN ERA."

⁷ Vera Diana Yulita, Andi Abd Muis, and Nurully Kesuma Ningrum, "Tafsir Methods in the Quran," *International Journal of Health, Economics, and Social Sciences (IJHESS)* 7, no. 2 (2025): 626–31.

⁸ Arib and Mokodenseho, "The Tahlili Method in the Interpretation of the Qur'an."

limitation that becomes increasingly problematic as researchers seek holistic Quranic answers to multi-dimensional contemporary issues. Conversely, the Maudhu'i method, though effective for thematic synthesis, risks decontextualizing individual verses if applied without rigorous methodological discipline.⁹ The absence of a comprehensive and critical comparative framework leaves a significant gap in the existing literature that this study seeks to fill¹⁰.

The Tahlili and Maudhu'i methods are selected as the objects of this research for three principal reasons. First, they represent the two dominant and most debated methodological poles in contemporary Quranic exegesis. Second, both methods are actively taught and applied in Islamic higher education institutions across the Muslim world, including Indonesia, making their comparative evaluation directly relevant to curriculum development and pedagogical practice. Third, despite their prominence, no recent study has undertaken a systematic comparative analysis that simultaneously addresses their definitions, historical development, characteristics, and critical limitations within a single unified framework. This research therefore aims to provide that analysis, contributing a structured and practically applicable reference for scholars, educators, and students in Islamic studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Tahlili (Analytical) Method

2.1.1. Definition and Characteristics

The Tahlili method, also known as the analytical method, involves a detailed, verse-by-verse interpretation of the Quran, following the order of the verses as they appear in the *mushaf*. This approach entails a comprehensive examination of each verse, exploring its various facets and meanings. Interpreters employing the Tahlili method meticulously analyze the vocabulary (*mufaradāt*), grammar, sentence structure, and rhetorical devices used in each verse. Furthermore, they investigate the connections between verses (*munāsabah*), seeking to understand the logical and thematic relationships within and between chapters. The reasons for the revelation of specific verses (*asbābun nuzul*) are also considered crucial for contextual understanding. This method often incorporates traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the sayings and actions of his companions, and the interpretations of the *Tabi'in* (the

⁹ Masykur Masykur and Iwan Caca Gunawan, "Legal Ratio of Tafsir Maudu'iy and Semantic Study," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 1 (2021): 377–86.

¹⁰ Faisal Faisal et al., "ANALYSIS OF THE SCIENTIFIC LEARNING APPROACH IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TO ENHANCE STUDENTS CRITICAL THINKING," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 13, no. 04 (2024): 815–36.

successors of the companions) to support the analysis. The Tahlili method is characterized by its systematic progression through the Quran, offering a multi-faceted analysis that encompasses linguistic, historical, legal, and theological perspectives. Scholars have identified several sub-types within the Tahlili method, including interpretation based on transmitted sources (*bi al-ma'tsūr*), based on reason (*bi al-ra'yi*), Sufi interpretations (*shūfī*), legal interpretations (*fiqhī*), philosophical interpretations (*falsafī*), scientific interpretations (*'ilmī*), and literary-social interpretations (*adabī al-ijtimā'ī*). These diverse approaches within the Tahlili framework reflect the broad scope and potential for detailed and lengthy works produced through this method¹¹.

2.1.2. Historical Development

The roots of Tahlili interpretation can be traced back to the earliest period of Islam, during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is believed that the Prophet himself explained the meanings of the Quranic verses to his companions, laying the foundation for subsequent interpretive efforts. Following the Prophet's passing, the task of interpretation was carried out by his companions, who relied on their understanding of the Arabic language, their knowledge of the context of revelation, and their close association with the Prophet. The era of the *Tabi'in* witnessed further development of Quranic exegesis, with the emergence of distinct interpretive schools in centers like Mecca, Medina, and Iraq. These schools built upon the knowledge transmitted by the companions, while also incorporating their own independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) in their interpretations. Key figures in the early development of Tahlili interpretation include Ibn 'Abbas, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, and Ubay ibn Ka'b among the companions, and Sa'id ibn Jubayr among the *Tabi'in* ¹². The monumental commentary (*tafsir*) compiled by al-Tabari (d. 923 CE) is considered a foundational work in the Tahlili tradition, assembling the traditional scholarship produced up to his time and serving as a comprehensive example of this method¹³. Over time, the Tahlili method continued to evolve, with subsequent scholars incorporating grammatical explanations, historical data, and diverse scholarly opinions into their commentaries¹⁴.

¹¹ Arib and Mokodenseho, "The Tahlilī Method in the Interpretation of the Qur'ān."

¹² Marwati and Hamzah, "THE HISTORY AND DYNAMICS OF TAFSIR IN THE TABI'IN ERA."

¹³ Britannica, "Tafsir Meaning, Types, Principles, & History," 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/tafsir>.

¹⁴ Wikipedia, "Tafsir."

2.1.3. The Impact of the Tahlili Method in the Contemporary Context

The Tahlili method continues to hold significant relevance in the modern era, owing to its capacity to analyze Quranic verses with exceptional depth across multiple dimensions, including linguistic, historical, social, and theological perspectives. Contemporary scholars have actively employed this method as an instrument for explaining Islamic teachings in response to modern challenges, particularly in areas concerning social ethics, moral discourse, and the spiritual needs of Muslim communities in the 21st century. Furthermore, recent scholarship has demonstrated that the Tahlili method serves as an indispensable foundation for the development of thematic (Maudhu'i) interpretation, as its comprehensive verse-by-verse analysis provides the detailed textual groundwork necessary for identifying and tracing Quranic themes systematically.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the Tahlili method faces growing challenges in the contemporary context. Modern Muslim communities increasingly demand thematic and practically oriented answers to complex contemporary issues such as bioethics, digital governance, environmental responsibility, and social justice. The sequential, verse-by-verse nature of the Tahlili approach does not always facilitate the kind of holistic, issue-based responses that contemporary audiences require. This has prompted scholars to advocate for a transformation of traditional tafsir methodologies, integrating classical analytical rigor with modern hermeneutical frameworks to ensure that Quranic interpretation remains responsive to the evolving needs of Muslim society.¹⁶

2.1.4. Strengths of the Tahlili Method

The Tahlili method possesses several notable strengths that have sustained its prominence throughout the history of Islamic scholarship. First and foremost, it offers an exceptionally deep and comprehensive analysis of individual verses, meticulously examining vocabulary (*mufaradāt*), grammatical structures, rhetorical devices, the circumstances of revelation (*asbabun nuzul*), and inter-verse relationships (*munāsabah*). This multi-layered analytical process ensures that each verse is understood within its fullest possible linguistic and contextual framework.¹⁷

¹⁵ Necmettin Gokkir, *The Application of Modern Critical Theories to the Study of the Qur'an-With a Particular Focus on Qur'anic Studies in Turkey Between 1980-2002* (The University of Manchester (United Kingdom), 2004).

¹⁶ Mustafa Saglam, "The Problem of Takalluf in Qur'anic Recitation: A Conceptual Analysis and a Practical Approach," *Artuklu Akademi* 12, no. 2 (2025): 525–47.

¹⁷ Zakiah Nasution and Nur Hasanah, "Implementation of Tahlili, Ijmali and Muqāran Methods in Thematic Hadith Study," *International Journal of Science and Environment (IJSE)* 6, no. 1 (2026): 1092–1100.

Second, the Tahlili method draws upon a broad and diverse range of scholarly disciplines, incorporating insights from Hadith sciences, Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), classical Arabic literature, and historical studies. This interdisciplinary approach enriches the interpretive process and produces commentaries of considerable scholarly depth. Third, by referencing the transmitted reports of the Prophet's companions, the *Tabi'in*, and subsequent generations of scholars, the Tahlili method preserves the rich cumulative tradition of Islamic scholarship, maintaining a strong chain of intellectual continuity. Fourth, the method affords interpreters the intellectual freedom to develop and advance new ideas and perspectives in Quranic commentary, provided they remain grounded within established methodological principles. Finally, as noted above, the detailed analyses produced through the Tahlili approach serve as an essential foundation upon which thematic (Maudhu'i) studies are built, making it indispensable to the broader enterprise of Quranic exegesis.

2.1.5. Weaknesses of the Tahlili Method

Despite its considerable strengths, the Tahlili method is not without significant limitations. The most frequently cited weakness is its tendency to present Quranic guidance in a fragmented manner. Because the method proceeds sequentially through the text, the reader may develop an understanding of individual verses in isolation, without gaining a unified and coherent perspective on the Quran's comprehensive teachings on any given theme. This fragmentation can make it difficult for both scholars and lay readers to extract clear, overarching Quranic positions on specific contemporary issues.¹⁸

Related to this, the Tahlili method is inherently less efficient for thematic inquiry. Scholars seeking to understand the Quran's holistic stance on a particular topic such as justice, mercy, or governance must undertake the additional labor of synthesizing dispersed verses across the entire Quran, a task that falls outside the primary scope of the Tahlili framework. Moreover, the exhaustive breadth of the Tahlili approach demands a level of expertise, patience, and scholarly mastery that is challenging to sustain consistently, making the production of high-quality Tahlili commentaries a demanding and time-intensive endeavor.

Another notable limitation is the risk of incorporating *israiliyyat* narratives of Jewish or Christian origin and other extraneous materials into the commentary. Because the Tahlili method casts a wide net of sources and traditions, the risk of including unverified or

¹⁸ Esin Tümer Kurnaz, “16. Yüzyıl Türk Edebiyatında Dinî, Ahlâkî, Tasavvufî Mesnevîlerdeki Hikâyeler (Tespit, Tahlil ve Köken Araştırması)” (Üzüküdar University (Turkey), 2024).

contextually inappropriate material is heightened. Additionally, scholars have noted that the Tahlili approach carries a potential for subjective bias, as the interpreter's personal, cultural, or ideological perspectives may subtly influence the selection and framing of the analysis. In particular, research has highlighted the possibility of gender bias in certain classical Tahlili works, where the partial and sequential nature of the interpretation may inadvertently reflect patriarchal assumptions embedded in the broader cultural context of the commentators.

2.2. The Maudhu'i (Thematic) Method

2.2.1. Definition and Characteristics

The Maudhu'i method, also known as thematic interpretation, represents a distinct approach to understanding the Quran. Instead of proceeding verse by verse, this method focuses on a specific theme or topic found within the Quran. Interpreters utilizing the Maudhu'i method gather all the verses throughout the entire Quran that relate to the chosen theme, regardless of their location in the text. These collected verses are then systematically arranged and interpreted under the chosen topic, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Quran's perspective on that particular issue. While the primary focus is thematic, interpreters often consider the historical context and reasons for revelation (*asbabun nuzul*) of the individual verses to gain a deeper understanding of their contribution to the overall theme. The Maudhu'i method encourages a holistic engagement with the Quran, seeking to synthesize the teachings related to a specific subject from various parts of the scripture¹⁹. Various approaches exist within Maudhu'i interpretation. Some focus on a single Surah (chapter) to explore its central theme, while others examine specific terms or concepts as they appear across the Quran²⁰. Conceptual thematic studies delve into ideas that may not be explicitly mentioned but are substantially present in the Quran, and thematic studies can even be carried out through the lens of specific characters mentioned in the Quran²¹. The ultimate goal of the Maudhu'i method is to present a unified and coherent understanding of the Quran's guidance on a particular theme, often with the aim of addressing contemporary social, ethical, or legal issues.

¹⁹ M. Jalaludin Almahaly, "Types of Maudu'i Interpretation of the Qur'an," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 1, no. 3 (2021): 387–96, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v1i3.13426>.

²⁰ Fadhil Ammar, "An Analysis Of Historical Development Of Tasir Mawdui," *Jurnal Usuluddin* 20, no. 2002 (2004): 89–104.

²¹ M Almahaly, "Types of Maudu'i Interpretation of the Qur'an," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 1 (July 26, 2021): 387–96, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v1i3.13426>.

2.2.2. Historical Development

While elements of thematic interpretation can be observed in earlier periods of Islamic scholarship, the Maudhu'i method as a formally recognized and widely adopted approach emerged primarily in the modern era²². This development was partly driven by the need to address contemporary challenges and to provide relevant Quranic guidance on emerging issues²³. Prominent scholars like Mahmud Syaltut, a leading figure in the Islamic world, played a significant role in introducing and popularizing the Maudhu'i method in his work "Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim". Syaltut emphasized the importance of exploring the Quran from a scientific perspective and encouraged the development of interpretation methods that could provide guidance for modern life²⁴. Another influential scholar, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, also contributed significantly to the conceptualization of Maudhu'i interpretation, defining it as an objective study of a particular topic from the Quran to produce a comprehensive theory on that subject²⁵. The rise of the Maudhu'i method in the 20th century, particularly within academic institutions like Al-Azhar University in Cairo, reflects a growing recognition of its value in providing holistic and applicable understandings of Islamic teachings in response to the complexities of the modern world²⁶.

2.2.3. The Impact of the Maudhu'i Method in the Contemporary Context

The Maudhu'i method has emerged as one of the most strategically significant approaches to Quranic interpretation in the modern era, owing to its inherent capacity to provide comprehensive, thematic responses to the complex challenges faced by contemporary Muslim societies. Unlike classical interpretive approaches that proceed sequentially through the Quranic text, the Maudhu'i method organizes verses thematically, enabling scholars and practitioners to derive holistic and directly applicable guidance on pressing contemporary issues such as social justice, human rights, environmental ethics, and digital governance. This thematic orientation has proven particularly valuable in academic and institutional settings, where the

²² Ammar, "An Analysis Of Historical Development Of Tasir Mawdui."

²³ Nanang Lubis and Milhan Milhan, "ANALYSIS OF MAUDHUIY'S TAFSIR METHOD: A THEMATIC APPROACH IN INTERPRETING THE QUR'AN," *SYAHADAT: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1 (September 30, 2024): 81–87, <https://doi.org/10.70489/3fajzp54>.

²⁴ Asrul Amir, Rudy Arianto, and Adriyan Misbahuddin, "CLASSIFICATION OF TAFSIR MAUDHU'I MAHMUD SYALTUT," *HUNafa Jurnal Studia Islamika* 20, no. 2 (2023): 289–301.

²⁵ Masykur Masykur and Iwan Caca Gunawan, "Legal Ratio of Tafsir Maudu'i and Semantic Study," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 1, no. 3 (2021): 377–86, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v1i3.13411>.

²⁶ Ammar, "An Analysis Of Historical Development Of Tasir Mawdui."

ability to present a unified Quranic perspective on a specific subject is essential for both scholarly research and policy development within the Muslim world.²⁷

Beyond its immediate practical utility, the Maudhu'i method has demonstrated significant epistemological value by functioning not merely as a hermeneutical tool, but as a broader model for renewing Islamic thought in response to global challenges. Its integrative and context-sensitive character enables scholars to construct frameworks of knowledge that unite scriptural insights with the demands of modern science, ethics, and social realities. This characteristic has positioned the Maudhu'i method as a leading approach in contemporary Islamic higher education, particularly in institutions seeking to develop curriculum that bridges classical scholarship with the needs of modern Muslim communities. Furthermore, its application has extended beyond Quranic studies into the field of Hadith methodology, where the thematic approach has demonstrated significant epistemological value in advancing contemporary legal, ethical, educational, and socio-cultural scholarship.²⁸

2.2.4. Strengths of the Maudhu'i Method

The Maudhu'i method is distinguished by a set of compelling strengths that explain its growing prominence in contemporary Islamic scholarship. First, it is highly practical and responsive to the challenges of the times, enabling scholars to directly address contemporary questions by presenting all relevant Quranic verses on a given topic in a coherent, organized, and readily applicable manner. This practicality makes it an indispensable tool for Muslim scholars, educators, and policymakers who require clear Quranic guidance on emerging social, ethical, and political issues.²⁹

Second, the method offers a systematic and dynamic analytical framework that is both structured in its methodology and flexible in its application across diverse thematic domains. By gathering and organizing all verses related to a chosen theme, the Maudhu'i method produces a comprehensive and unified picture of the Quran's stance on that subject a picture that would be impossible to construct through sequential verse-by-verse reading alone. Third, the Maudhu'i approach facilitates a holistic understanding of Quranic teachings, revealing

²⁷ Imam Muslim Amin, Dede Kurniawan, and Eni Zulaiha, "Tafsir Maudhu'i: Menelisik Sejarah, Metode, Dan Signifikansinya Dalam Pemikiran Tafsir Kontemporer," *Jurnal Syntax Imperatif: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan* 5, no. 6 (2025): 1330–39.

²⁸ Ahmad Fadly, Duski Samad, and Firdaus Mamad, "THEMATIC INTERPRETATION AS AN INTEGRATIVE EPISTEMOLOGICAL MODEL FOR CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Reseach* 1, no. 5 (2025): 139–54.

²⁹ Adi Pratama Awadin and Asep Taopik Hidayah, "Hakikat Dan Urgensi Metode Tafsir Maudhu ' i" 2, no. 2 (2023): 178–83.

thematic coherence and interconnections across different chapters and sections of the scripture that might otherwise remain obscure. Fourth, its efficiency and effectiveness in addressing contemporary challenges make it particularly well-suited to academic research, as scholars can conduct focused, in-depth thematic studies without the need to produce exhaustive commentaries on the entire Quran. Finally, the Maudhu'i method has proven to be more aligned with the living conditions of modern Muslims, offering guidance that is relevant, accessible, and directly applicable to the realities of contemporary Muslim life.

2.2.5. Weaknesses of the Maudhu'i Method

Despite its considerable strengths, the Maudhu'i method carries several inherent limitations that scholars must carefully navigate. The most fundamental weakness is the risk of decontextualizing individual verses. Because the method extracts verses from their original sequential positions in the Quran and reassembles them under a chosen theme, there is a significant danger that the immediate literary, historical, and contextual meaning of individual verses may be obscured or distorted. This decontextualization, if not handled with rigorous methodological discipline, can lead to interpretations that reflect the thematic framework imposed by the scholar rather than the authentic intent of the Quranic text.³⁰

A closely related limitation is that the Maudhu'i method limits the understanding of individual verses by subordinating them to a broader thematic agenda. Verses that carry rich and multifaceted meanings in their original context may be reduced to single-dimensional contributors to a predetermined theme, thereby narrowing the interpretive richness that characterizes the Quran's message. Furthermore, the process of selecting and categorizing verses under a specific theme introduces a risk of scholarly bias, as the choice of which verses to include, and how to arrange and interpret them, is inevitably influenced by the researcher's theoretical assumptions, ideological orientation, and cultural context. This subjectivity poses a challenge to the objective rigor that rigorous academic scholarship demands.³¹

Additionally, the Maudhu'i method does not provide the full context of every verse it employs, meaning that readers of thematic studies may gain a comprehensive understanding of the chosen theme while remaining uninformed about the broader narrative and theological significance of the individual verses within the Quran as a whole. This limitation underscores the importance of combining the Maudhu'i method with other interpretive approaches

³⁰ Mohammad Rif, "Tafsir Maudhu' i Dan Ramifikasi Permasalahannya" 2, no. 2 (2022): 233–38.

³¹ Hasanah Linggau, "MEMAHAMI METODE TAFSIR MAUDHU'I KELEBIHAN DAN KEKURANGANNYA DALAM MENGGALI AL-QUR'AN Hasanah As Shifah," *Hasanah As Shifah*, 2025.

particularly the Tahlili method to ensure that thematic understanding is always grounded in a deep and contextually accurate appreciation of the Quranic text.

2.3. Comparative Perspectives in Existing Literature

Existing scholarly literature offers various perspectives on comparing and contrasting the Tahlili and Maudhu'i methods of Quranic interpretation. A recurring theme in these comparisons is the difference in their scope of analysis. The Tahlili method adopts a micro-level approach, focusing on the detailed examination of individual verses in their sequential order within the Quran. This allows for an in-depth understanding of the linguistic nuances, historical context, and legal or theological implications of each verse. In contrast, the Maudhu'i method employs a macro-level perspective, transcending the sequential order of the Quran to gather and analyze verses related to a specific theme. This thematic approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the Quran's stance on particular topics, revealing connections and patterns that might not be apparent through a verse-by-verse reading. Scholarly discussions also highlight the suitability of each method for different research objectives. The Tahlili method is often preferred for gaining a thorough understanding of the Quran's overall message and for detailed exegetical studies of specific passages. The Maudhu'i method, on the other hand, is considered particularly effective for addressing contemporary issues and for conducting thematic studies on specific aspects of Islamic teachings. Some scholars note that while the Tahlili method provides a rich and detailed analysis, it can be less efficient for thematic inquiries. Conversely, the Maudhu'i method, while excellent for thematic understanding, carries the potential risk of taking verses out of their immediate context if not applied carefully³². These comparative perspectives underscore the distinct strengths and weaknesses of each method, emphasizing the importance of choosing the most appropriate approach based on the specific goals of the research.

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Research Design

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology to conduct a comparative analysis of the Tahlili and Maudhu'i methods in Quranic studies³³. The primary aim of this approach is to provide a comprehensive summarization and description of the existing

³² Yulita, Muis, and Ningrum, "Tafsir Methods in the Quran," 2025.

³³ Louise Doyle et al., "An Overview of the Qualitative Descriptive Design within Nursing Research," *Journal of Research in Nursing* 25, no. 5 (2020): 443–55.

knowledge regarding these two methods, focusing on their characteristics, historical development, strengths, and weaknesses, as documented in scholarly literature³⁴. A qualitative descriptive design is deemed appropriate for this study as it allows for the systematic exploration and articulation of well-established concepts and methodologies within the field of Quranic interpretation. This method facilitates the categorization and synthesis of information from various sources to present a clear and factual overview of the subject matter, without necessarily aiming to develop new theories or engage in highly abstract conceptualization³⁵.

3.2. Data Sources

The data for this research are secondary in nature, derived from a comprehensive review of existing scholarly literature. The sources utilized include peer-reviewed academic journals specializing in Islamic studies and Quranic exegesis, scholarly books authored by experts in the field of Quranic interpretation, and relevant academic databases that index and provide access to such publications. The selection of these sources prioritizes those that offer in-depth discussions, analyses, and comparisons of the Tahlili and Maudhu'i methods, ensuring a robust and well-informed foundation for the comparative analysis undertaken in this study. Credible journals in Islamic studies, such as the *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* and *Islamic Law and Society*, along with authoritative encyclopedias like the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, serve as key resources for this research.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The process of data collection involved a systematic search for relevant literature using keywords related to "Tafsir Tahlili," "Tafsir Maudhu'i," "analytical interpretation of Quran," "thematic interpretation of Quran," and "comparison of Tafsir methods." This search was conducted across various academic databases and journal platforms to ensure a comprehensive retrieval of pertinent scholarly works. The analysis of the collected data involved a careful and critical reading of the selected sources to identify key information regarding the definitions, historical development, characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses of both the Tahlili and Maudhu'i methods. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and points of comparison in the literature concerning the two methods³⁶. This involved categorizing the information gathered under the aforementioned aspects of comparison to facilitate a

³⁴ V.A. Lambert C.E. Lambert, "Editorial: Qualitative Descriptive Research: An Acceptable Design," *Scholarly Inquiry and the DNP Capstone*, no. 4 (2012): 255–56.

³⁵ Brylialfi Wahyu Furidha, "Comprehension of the Descriptive Qualitative Research Method: A Critical Assessment of the Literature," *Acitya Wisesa: Journal Of Multidisciplinary Research*, 2023, 1–8.

³⁶ Doyle et al., "An Overview of the Qualitative Descriptive Design within Nursing Research."

structured and systematic analysis of the similarities and differences between the Tahlili and Maudhu'i approaches to Quranic interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Comparative Analysis of Definition and Characteristics

The Tahlili and Maudhu'i methods represent fundamentally different approaches to Quranic interpretation. The Tahlili method is defined by its verse-by-verse analysis of the Quran, proceeding sequentially through the text and examining each verse in detail³⁷. Its primary focus is on understanding the meaning of individual verses within their immediate context, exploring linguistic nuances, grammatical structures, and the historical circumstances surrounding their revelation. The organizational structure of Tahlili interpretation follows the order of the Quranic verses in the *mushaf*, providing a systematic and comprehensive commentary from the beginning to the end of the scripture. In contrast, the Maudhu'i method is characterized by its thematic approach, selecting a specific topic and gathering all relevant verses from across the entire Quran to provide a holistic understanding of the Quran's perspective on that theme. Its primary focus shifts from individual verses to broader thematic coherence, aiming to synthesize the Quranic teachings on a particular subject. The organizational structure of Maudhu'i interpretation is thematic, arranging the collected verses under specific topics rather than following the Quran's sequence. While Tahlili interpretation emphasizes understanding each verse within its immediate context, Maudhu'i interpretation considers the broader context of the chosen theme across the Quran, potentially including the *asbabun nuzul* of individual verses to illuminate their thematic relevance. These differing characteristics significantly influence the interpretation process. Tahlili interpretation tends to produce detailed and comprehensive commentaries on the entire Quran, while Maudhu'i interpretation results in focused studies on specific topics of interest or contemporary relevance³⁸.

³⁷ Arib and Mokodenseho, "The Tahlili Method in the Interpretation of the Qur'an."

³⁸ Almahaly, "Types of Maudhu'i Interpretation of the Qur'an," 2021.

Table 1: Comparison of Tahlili and Maudhu'i Methods (Definition and Characteristics)

Feature	Tahlili Method	Maudhu'i Method
Definition	Verse-by-verse analysis of the Quran in sequential order	Thematic analysis, gathering all verses related to a specific topic
Primary Focus	Understanding individual verses within their immediate context	Holistic understanding of the Quran's perspective on a particular theme
Organizational Structure	Follows the order of verses in the <i>mushaf</i>	Thematic arrangement of verses under specific topics
Treatment of Context	Emphasizes the immediate context of each verse, including <i>asbabun nuzul</i>	Considers the broader thematic context across the Quran, including <i>asbabun nuzul</i>

The comparison between the Tahlili and Maudhu'i methods in Quranic exegesis highlights their distinct analytical frameworks and interpretative approaches. The Tahlili method employs a verse-by-verse analysis, following the sequential order of the Quran, which allows for a detailed and systematic examination of each verse within its immediate linguistic, historical, and contextual background. This method heavily relies on *asbabun nuzul* (circumstances of revelation), ensuring that each verse is interpreted in light of the specific situation in which it was revealed. In contrast, the Maudhu'i method adopts a thematic approach, where all verses related to a particular topic are gathered and analyzed collectively. This method provides a holistic perspective on Quranic teachings regarding various subjects, such as justice, mercy, and governance, without being constrained by the *mushaf*'s sequential arrangement. While the Tahlili method offers precision and depth in understanding individual verses, it may not always capture the broader Quranic message on specific themes. On the other hand, the Maudhu'i method allows for a more comprehensive and interconnected interpretation, which is particularly useful for addressing contemporary issues. However, this approach may risk losing the nuances of individual verses when they are separated from their original context. Both methods, therefore, offer unique strengths and limitations, and their combined application

can enhance the depth and breadth of Quranic interpretation, allowing scholars to derive a more balanced and contextualized understanding of the sacred text.

4.2. Comparative Analysis of Historical Development

The Tahlili method boasts a longer history within Islamic scholarship, with its origins tracing back to the earliest interpretations by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions³⁹. Its development continued through the era of the *Tabi'in* and flourished in the subsequent centuries, exemplified by foundational works like al-Tabari's commentary⁴⁰. The popularity of the Tahlili method throughout history can be attributed to its systematic and comprehensive approach, providing a detailed understanding of the entire Quranic text⁴¹. In contrast, the Maudhu'i method, while having roots in earlier thematic considerations within Quranic interpretation, emerged as a more formalized and widely adopted approach in the modern era⁴². Its rise in prominence was partly a response to the increasing need for Quranic guidance on contemporary issues and the desire for a holistic understanding of specific themes relevant to modern life⁴³. Key figures like Mahmud Syaltut and Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr played pivotal roles in shaping and promoting the Maudhu'i method, recognizing its potential to provide practical and systematic insights into various aspects of Islamic teachings⁴⁴. The historical context thus reveals that while Tahlili interpretation has been a cornerstone of Quranic studies for centuries, the Maudhu'i method represents a more recent development, gaining traction as a valuable tool for addressing the specific needs and challenges of the modern world.

4.3. Comparative Analysis of Strengths

The Tahlili method possesses several notable strengths. Its in-depth analysis of individual verses allows for a comprehensive understanding of their linguistic nuances, historical context, and legal or theological implications. By following the sequential order of the Quran, it ensures that each verse is interpreted within its immediate literary and thematic context, contributing to a systematic and thorough understanding of the entire scripture⁴⁵. This method is particularly valuable for detailed exegetical studies and for gaining a deep appreciation of the interconnectedness of verses within a specific passage or chapter. On the

³⁹ Marwati and Hamzah, "THE HISTORY AND DYNAMICS OF TAFSIR IN THE TABI'IN ERA."

⁴⁰ Britannica, "Tafsir Meaning, Types, Principles, & History."

⁴¹ Marwati and Hamzah, "THE HISTORY AND DYNAMICS OF TAFSIR IN THE TABI'IN ERA."

⁴² Ammar, "An Analysis Of Historical Development Of Tasir Mawdui."

⁴³ Lubis and Milhan, "ANALYSIS OF MAUDHUI'S TAFSIR METHOD: A THEMATIC APPROACH IN INTERPRETING THE QUR'AN."

⁴⁴ Amir, Arianto, and Misbahuddin, "CLASSIFICATION OF TAFSIR MAUDHU'I MAHMUD SYALTUT."

⁴⁵ Arib and Mokodenseho, "The Tahlili Method in the Interpretation of the Qur'an."

other hand, the Maudhu’i method offers distinct advantages, particularly in its ability to address contemporary issues and provide a holistic understanding of specific themes across the Quran. By gathering all relevant verses on a particular topic, it allows for the synthesis of Quranic teachings from various parts of the scripture, offering a comprehensive perspective that can be directly applied to modern challenges. Its practical and systematic nature makes it well-suited for thematic studies, enabling researchers to gain focused insights into specific areas of Islamic thought and practice⁴⁶. The strengths of each method thus cater to different research needs and objectives, with Tahlili excelling in detailed verse-level analysis and Maudhu’i proving highly effective for thematic and application-oriented studies.

Table 2: Comparison of Tahlili and Maudhu’i Methods (Strengths)

Strength	Tahlili Method	Maudhu’i Method
In-depth Analysis	Provides detailed examination of individual verses, including linguistic and contextual aspects	Offers a deep understanding of a specific theme by analyzing all related verses across the Quran
Comprehensive Understanding of Context	Interprets verses within their immediate literary and thematic context in the Quran	Provides a holistic understanding of specific themes, relevant for addressing contemporary issues
Systematic Approach	Follows a sequential, verse-by-verse approach through the entire Quran	Practical and systematic for conducting focused thematic studies

The Tahlili and Maudhu’i methods each possess distinct strengths that contribute to Quranic interpretation in different ways. The Tahlili method excels in in-depth analysis, as it provides a detailed examination of individual verses, incorporating linguistic, historical, and contextual aspects. This meticulous approach ensures that every verse is understood within its immediate literary and thematic framework, preserving its original intent and significance. Additionally, the Tahlili method follows a systematic and structured verse-by-verse approach, allowing scholars to analyze the Quran comprehensively while maintaining the sequence in which it was revealed.

⁴⁶ Yulita, Muis, and Ningrum, “Tafsir Methods in the Quran,” 2025.

In contrast, the Maudhu'i method offers a holistic and thematic understanding of Quranic teachings by gathering and analyzing all related verses on a specific topic. This approach is particularly useful for contemporary applications, as it enables scholars to derive Quranic perspectives on issues such as social justice, ethics, and governance by considering multiple relevant verses collectively. Furthermore, the Maudhu'i method provides a practical and systematic framework for conducting focused thematic studies, making it an effective tool for scholars and researchers who seek to address modern challenges through an Islamic perspective.

Both methods, while distinct in their approaches, offer complementary advantages. The Tahlili method ensures depth and precision in verse interpretation, while the Maudhu'i method provides a broader and interconnected analysis of Quranic themes. Integrating both approaches can lead to a more nuanced and well-rounded understanding of the Quran, balancing detailed verse analysis with thematic coherence.

4.4. Comparative Analysis of Weaknesses

Despite their strengths, both the Tahlili and Maudhu'i methods also have certain limitations. A potential weakness of the Tahlili method is that it can be less effective for conducting thematic studies, as it follows the order of the *mushaf* rather than grouping verses by topic. This can make it challenging to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Quran's teachings on a specific theme without undertaking a separate thematic analysis⁴⁷. Additionally, some critics argue that Tahlili interpretation can sometimes be subjective, influenced by the interpreter's personal biases or the inclusion of extraneous material like *israiliyat* (stories of Jewish origin)⁴⁸. On the other hand, the Maudhu'i method faces the potential weakness of taking verses out of their immediate context, as it focuses on thematic connections across different parts of the Quran. This decontextualization, if not handled carefully, could lead to a limited or even distorted understanding of the original meaning and intent of individual verses. Furthermore, the process of collecting and analyzing all relevant verses for a particular theme requires significant effort and expertise to ensure thoroughness and accuracy. Researchers employing the Maudhu'i method must also be mindful of ensuring that their thematic analysis remains in accordance with the context of each individual verse and the overall message of the Quran⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ Ammar, "An Analysis Of Historical Development Of Tasir Mawdui."

⁴⁸ Yulita, Muis, and Ningrum, "Tafsir Methods in the Quran," 2025.

⁴⁹ Yulita, Muis, and Ningrum.

Table 3: Comparison of Tahlili and Maudhu'i Methods (Weaknesses)

Weakness	Tahlili Method	Maudhu'i Method
Less Effective for Thematic Studies	Primarily follows the sequential order of the Quran, making thematic analysis less direct	Can potentially take verses out of their immediate context, affecting the understanding of individual verses
Potential for Subjectivity	Risk of subjective interpretations or inclusion of extraneous material	Requires careful effort to ensure thoroughness and accuracy in collecting and analyzing all relevant verses
Limited Thematic Understanding (Indirect)	Requires additional effort to synthesize thematic understandings from verse-by-verse analysis	Challenge of ensuring thematic analysis remains consistent with the original context of each verse

The Tahlili and Maudhu'i methods, while both valuable in Quranic exegesis, each have inherent weaknesses that must be considered when applying them in interpretation. The Tahlili method, due to its sequential verse-by-verse approach, is less effective for thematic studies since it does not directly categorize verses under specific topics. This limitation makes it challenging for scholars to derive comprehensive thematic insights without additional effort to synthesize related verses scattered throughout the Quran. Additionally, the Tahlili approach carries a risk of subjectivity, as interpretations may be influenced by the exegete's personal perspectives or the inclusion of extraneous historical and linguistic details that may not always be necessary for thematic coherence. Furthermore, the thematic understanding in the Tahlili method is indirect, requiring extra analytical work to extract overarching themes from a fragmented textual structure.

On the other hand, the Maudhu'i method, despite its strength in providing a holistic thematic perspective, also has its limitations. Since this method rearranges verses based on themes, there is a risk of taking verses out of their immediate context, which can affect the accurate interpretation of individual verses. Scholars must be meticulous in ensuring that each verse remains contextually relevant to the theme without distorting its intended meaning. Additionally, the Maudhu'i approach requires rigorous efforts to maintain objectivity, as the

process of selecting and categorizing verses may introduce bias or inconsistency in thematic structuring. Finally, ensuring that the thematic analysis remains consistent with the original context of each verse is a significant challenge, as grouping verses under a single theme may overlook subtle contextual variations present in different surahs.

In conclusion, while the Tahlili method excels in preserving the original sequence and detailed interpretation of individual verses, it struggles with thematic synthesis. Conversely, the Maudhu'i method is effective in drawing broad thematic insights but must be applied carefully to avoid misinterpretation due to contextual shifts. A balanced approach, integrating both methods, may provide a more comprehensive and contextually sound understanding of Quranic teachings.

4.5. Examples of Application

The Tahlili method has been extensively applied in numerous classical and contemporary Tafsir works. For instance, the *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān* by al-Tabari meticulously explains the Quran verse by verse, drawing upon linguistic analysis, narrations from the Prophet and his companions, and the views of early scholars. Similarly, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* by Ibn Kathir provides a detailed analytical interpretation of the entire Quran, referencing various sources and offering comprehensive explanations for each verse⁵⁰. These works exemplify the in-depth and systematic nature of the Tahlili approach. The Maudhu'i method has also been widely employed, particularly in addressing contemporary issues. For example, studies on the concept of pluralism in Islam often utilize the Maudhu'i method, gathering verses from different parts of the Quran that relate to tolerance, interfaith relations, and the acceptance of diversity to provide a comprehensive Islamic perspective on the topic⁵¹. Similarly, thematic interpretations have been conducted on topics such as social justice, economic principles, and human rights in the Quran, drawing together scattered verses to offer a cohesive understanding of the Quran's teachings on these subjects⁵². The choice of method significantly influences the focus and outcomes of the interpretation. While Tahlili interpretations offer a detailed understanding of the Quranic text in its entirety, Maudhu'i interpretations provide focused and relevant insights into specific themes, often with direct implications for contemporary life.

⁵⁰ Yulita, Muis, and Ningrum.

⁵¹ Lalu Bustanil ulum, Novi Amelia Putri, and Nur Farhati, "Islam's View of Pluralisme: A Study of Maudhu'i Tafsir," *Bulletin of Islamic Research* 2, no. 3 (2024): 343–64, <https://doi.org/10.69526/bir.v2i3.31>.

⁵² Lubis and Milhan, "ANALYSIS OF MAUDHUIY'S TAFSIR METHOD: A THEMATIC APPROACH IN INTERPRETING THE QUR'AN."

CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis has highlighted the fundamental distinctions between the Tahlili and Maudhu'i methods of Quranic interpretation. The Tahlili method, with its verse-by-verse approach, offers an in-depth and systematic understanding of the Quranic text within its immediate context, tracing its roots back to the earliest period of Islamic scholarship. Its strength lies in providing a comprehensive analysis of individual verses, encompassing linguistic, historical, and theological dimensions. However, it can be less efficient for thematic inquiries and carries the potential for subjective interpretations. Conversely, the Maudhu'i method, a more recent formal development, focuses on specific themes, gathering and synthesizing relevant verses from across the Quran to provide a holistic understanding of the Quran's perspective on particular topics. Its strength lies in its ability to address contemporary issues and offer practical insights into various aspects of Islamic teachings. Nevertheless, it requires careful application to avoid decontextualizing individual verses. Understanding these methodological nuances is crucial for conducting rigorous and insightful Quranic studies, allowing researchers to select the most appropriate method based on their specific research questions and objectives. Future research could explore hybrid approaches that integrate elements of both methods, potentially combining the detailed analysis of Tahlili with the thematic focus of Maudhu'i to achieve a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the Quran. Further investigation into the application of these methods in specific thematic areas of the Quran could also yield valuable insights for contemporary Islamic thought and practice.

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