

HUMANS AS SOCIAL BEINGS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE QUR'AN (A Thematic Exegesis of Surah Al-'Alaq/96:3 and Surah Az-Zukhruf/43:32 and Their Application in Contemporary Social Reality)

Suke Indah Khumaero, Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram

Corresponding Author: Suke Indah Khumaero
Email*: sukeindahkhumaero@s2@uinmataram.ac.id

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Abstract: *The growing challenges of contemporary society, including declining literacy, widening economic inequality, and increasing individualism, raise important questions regarding the Qur'anic conception of human beings as social creatures. This study aims to explore the concept of humans as social beings from the perspective of the Qur'an through a thematic interpretation of Surah Al-'Alaq (96):3 and Surah Az-Zukhruf (43):32 and to examine its relevance to contemporary social realities. This research employs a qualitative library research method using the thematic (maudhu'i) approach. The analysis compares classical exegetical perspectives represented by al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, and al-Qurtubi with contemporary interpretations, particularly that of M. Quraish Shihab. The findings reveal that Surah Al-'Alaq (96):3 establishes knowledge as the foundation of human dignity and social development, while Surah Az-Zukhruf (43):32 emphasizes social differentiation and interdependence as part of the divine order intended to foster cooperation rather than domination. The synthesis of these verses produces a Qur'anic social paradigm built upon three main pillars: knowledge as the foundation of civilization, social differentiation as a mechanism of cooperation, and tawhid-based ethics as moral guidance for social structures. This study concludes that the Qur'an presents human beings not merely as individuals living in society but as morally responsible social beings whose dignity is realized through knowledge and harmonious interdependence. This paradigm offers a relevant framework for addressing contemporary issues such as literacy crises, economic disparities, and social fragmentation in the digital era.*

Keywords: *Human Sociality; Qur'anic Social Paradigm; Thematic Exegesis; Al-'Alaq; Az-Zukhruf.*

Introduction

According to Islamic teachings, human existence is not meaningless; rather, it has a noble purpose, namely devotion to Allah SWT and readiness to face the challenges and trials of life.¹ Human beings possess various dimensions that shape their existence. These dimensions include physical, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects. Each of these aspects is interconnected and collectively defines the overall characteristics of human beings. In this context, understanding the social characteristics of human beings is crucial, as humans cannot live in isolation from others. As social

¹ Nida Shofiyah dkk., "Tujuan Penciptaan Manusia Dalam Kajian Al-Quran," ZAD Al Mufasssirin 5, no. 1 (30 Juni 2023): 3, <https://doi.org/10.55759/zam.v5i1.54>.

beings, interactions between individuals and society, as well as the surrounding environment, constitute one of the primary elements of human life.² Therefore, the concept of humans as social beings remains a relevant topic for discussion in various scientific studies. Within the context of Islam, the concept of humans as social beings is clearly emphasized. teaches that Allah SWT. Islam created humans with the purpose of living in harmony with one another.

Numerous verses in the Qur'an provide teachings on the importance of maintaining good social relationships, such as mutual respect, mutual aid, and cooperation to achieve beneficial and virtuous goals. Therefore, Islam teaches the importance of living harmoniously in society and regulates all aspects of social life, ranging from marriage, the distribution of wealth, to the system of governance.

The author focuses the discussion on specific verses, although there are many other verses that also address human social characteristics, because the selected verses provide a strong and profound foundation for explaining the concept of humans as social beings from the perspective of the Qur'an. Thus, this study focuses its analysis on QS. Surah Al-'Alaq verse 3 and QS. Surah Az-Zukhruf verse 31. The first verse represents the epistemological foundation (knowledge and literacy) as the basis for the formation of society. Meanwhile, the second verse contains a social critique of stratification based on materialism and elitism.

Methodologically, this study employs a thematic (*maudhu'i*) exegetical approach by comparing the interpretations of classical scholars, such as Al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir, and other classical exegetes with those of contemporary figures like M. Quraish Shihab. In the context of contemporary life, marked by economic inequality, low literacy rates, and weakened social bonds due to digitalization, a reinterpretation of these verses becomes crucial. This study emphasizes that the social exegesis of the Qur'an plays a liberating role and fosters the realization of a more civilized and just society.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative library research design to investigate the Qur'anic concept of human beings as social creatures through a thematic interpretation (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*) of Surah Al-'Alaq (96):3 and Surah Az-Zukhruf (43):32. Library research was selected because the primary objective of the study was to construct a conceptual understanding derived from authoritative textual sources rather than empirical field observations. In qualitative inquiry, meanings are interpreted through systematic analysis of texts, ideas, and contexts to generate comprehensive explanations of social and religious phenomena.³

The primary sources of this research consisted of the Qur'an and classical as well as contemporary works of Qur'anic exegesis, including *Jāmi' al-Bayān* by al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* by Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān* by al-Qurṭubī, and *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ* by M. Quraish

² Elly M. Setiadi, Kama Abdul Hakam, dan Ridwan Effendi, Ilmu Sosial C Budaya Dasar, 184.

³ Abdul Hayy al-Farmawi, *Al-Bidāyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī* (Cairo: Dār al-Tawzī' wa al-Nashr al-Islāmiyyah, 1977), 52–67.

Shihab. Secondary sources included scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and recent studies on Qur'anic social ethics, thematic interpretation, Islamic anthropology, and contemporary social theory. The selection of these sources was based on their academic credibility, relevance to the research objectives, and contribution to understanding the Qur'anic worldview concerning human sociality.⁴

The study adopted the thematic (mawḍū'ī) approach, which examines Qur'anic verses related to a specific theme by collecting, organizing, and interpreting them comprehensively to produce an integrated conceptual framework. This approach enables the researcher to synthesize various Qur'anic messages concerning social interaction, knowledge, and human interdependence into a coherent theoretical construction.³ To enrich the analysis, the study also employed a comparative exegetical approach (al-tafsīr al-muqāran) by comparing interpretations from classical exegetes with those of contemporary scholars. This comparative analysis aimed to identify both continuity and transformation in interpreting the selected verses within changing socio-historical contexts.

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The analytical procedures involved several stages: (1) identifying Qur'anic verses related to human social existence; (2) collecting relevant interpretations from selected exegetical works; (3) classifying the interpretations into thematic categories; (4) comparing classical and contemporary exegetical perspectives; and (5) synthesizing the findings into a Qur'anic social paradigm applicable to contemporary social realities. Through this interpretive process, the research sought to uncover the epistemological, ethical, and sociological dimensions embedded in the selected Qur'anic verses while maintaining fidelity to the textual context and contemporary relevance.⁴

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied **source triangulation** by cross-examining interpretations from multiple authoritative exegetical traditions alongside contemporary academic literature. The credibility of the analysis was further strengthened through contextual interpretation, consistency in thematic categorization, and critical engagement with recent scholarly discussions on Qur'anic social thought and thematic exegesis.⁵

Results and Discussion

Surah al-'Alaq contains theological, epistemological, and spiritual foundations that are of great importance in Islam. The opening verses of this surah not only emphasize the urgency of reading as a gateway to knowledge but also open up a horizon of understanding regarding the origins of human creation, the dynamics of consciousness, and the existential relationship between humanity, the universe, and God.

⁴ H. L. A. Hartono, "Thematic Interpretation (Tafsir Mawḍū'ī): Methodological Development in Contemporary Qur'anic Studies," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 12, no. 1 (2024): 55–74.

⁵ Muhammad Chirzin, "The Development of Thematic Qur'anic Interpretation in Contemporary Islamic Scholarship," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 25, no. 2 (2024): 213–231.

In the classical view, Allah's title as al-Akram reflects that knowledge is a divine gift bestowed upon humanity, not merely the result of individual effort or toil. In this context, God as al-Akram is understood not only as the source of knowledge but also as the source of spiritual and intellectual freedom that guides humanity toward a transformation of meaning and values, paving the way for a deeper understanding of the self and the universe.

In *Ta'ammulāt fī Sūrah al-'Alaq*, it is explained that this surah directs the discussion toward the contemplative dimension of humanity as epistemic, spiritual, and cosmic beings.⁶ Quran, Surah Al-'Alaq, verse 3 reads:

اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ

"Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous."

In classical exegesis, this verse is understood as an affirmation of the command to read, which serves as the foundational starting point for the revelation. According to Al-Tabari, the command "iqra'" is a direct instruction from Allah to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, to read the revelation conveyed through the Angel Gabriel. The term "al-akram" signifies the majesty of Allah in bestowing knowledge upon humanity as the greatest of His blessings.⁷

Meanwhile, Ibn Kathir interprets that the majesty of Allah manifested in the teaching to humanity of something previously unknown to them. Knowledge becomes a symbol of human nobility compared to other creatures.⁸ As for Al-Qurthubi's exegesis, the meaning of the word "Akram" in this verse is "the Most Generous."⁹ From a classical perspective, this verse focuses on theological and prophetic dimensions, namely the legitimization of the Prophet's mission and the affirmation of the importance of revelation as the source of knowledge. Thus, classical exegesis positions Surah Al-'Alaq, verse 3, as the epistemological foundation of Islam derived from revelation.

In contrast to the classical, normative-theological approach, contemporary exegesis expands the meaning to include social dimensions. M. Quraish Shihab, in his *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, emphasizes that "iqra'" does not merely mean reading the text of revelation, but also reading social reality, history, and the phenomena of life. Until now, the word "Al-alaq" has generally been interpreted as a clot of blood. However, as cited from the *Al-Mishbah* exegesis, the word Al-Alaq actually implies social responsibility.

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ

He created man from a clot of blood. (Q.S. al-'Alaq [96]: 2)

According to Quraish Shihab, this verse emphasizes the process of human creation. The Quran, Shihab continues, describes the creation of humanity in a very comprehensive manner, covering many aspects both vertical and horizontal, ritual-social as well as muamalah. In fact, the Quran has described

⁶ Mahrusillah, Mohamad. *Ta'ammulāt fī Sūrah al-'Alaq*. Tangerang: STISNU Nusantara Press, 2025, Hlm. 29-38

⁷ Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, *Tafsir Ath-Thabari* (Jakarta: Pustaka Azzam, 2009) hlm. 298

⁸ Ibn Katsir, *Lubaabut Tafsir Min Ibn Katsir*, (Kairo: Muassasah Daar al-Hilaal, 1994)

⁹ Al-Qurṭubī, Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣārī. *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*. Edited by Aḥmad al-Bardūnī and Ibrāhīm Aṭfīsh. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1964. Hlm. 548

in such detail the extraordinary potential of humanity, such as intellectual capacity, the strength of the heart, the power of the mind, and even human physical traits, including impulsiveness, a tendency to complain, and so on. These points may lead one to perceive that verse 2 of Surah Al-‘Alaq does not merely discuss reproduction and the origins of human creation, but also addresses the innate nature of humans as social beings. This view is based on a linguistic analysis of the meaning of al-‘alaq. According to linguists, this word does not have a single meaning—namely, a clot of blood—but carries other connotations, including clotted blood; a black, worm-like creature found in water; and something that hangs or clings.

Furthermore, Allah places the word al-insan before the word al-‘alaq. Semantically speaking, the word al-insan is derived from the word uns, meaning pleasant, docile, and harmonious; or from the word nisya, meaning to forget. Some also suggest it comes from the word naus, meaning movement or dynamism. These meanings, says Shihab, at the very least provide a general overview of the potential or nature of this creature, namely that it possesses a tendency to forget and a capacity for movement that generates dynamism. It is also a creature that naturally or inherently brings joy, harmony, and happiness to others.

Furthermore, the word ‘alaq, according to Shihab, can also be understood as referring to the nature of humans as social beings who cannot live alone but are always dependent on others. The word الأكرم (al-akram) is commonly translated as the Most Generous or the Most Noble. This word is derived from the word كرم (karama), which, among other things, means: giving freely and selflessly, of high value, honorable, noble, loyal, and possessing a noble character.¹⁰

From this linguistic analysis, in Shihab’s view, it can be concluded that human beings are creatures created by Allah the Almighty with an inherent dependence on others until the end of their life’s journey, even beyond their life in this world. Throughout human history, no one has ever lived in isolation, separated from other human groups. Aristotle (384–322 BCE), an ancient Greek philosopher, stated in his teachings that humans are zoon politicon, meaning that, as creatures, humans fundamentally seek to live in society. Because of this innate desire to associate with one another, humans are referred to as social beings. Additionally, Ibn Khaldun’s theory of social solidarity (*‘ashabiyyah*) emphasizes that civilization arises from social interaction rooted in collective consciousness. As individuals, humans possess a solitary inner life; yet, as human beings as social beings cannot be separated from society. Humans are born, live, grow, and die within society.

That impression would clearly not be conveyed if the word ‘alaq were replaced with the word turab (earth), for example, or any other word. The word ‘alaq is also interpreted as one of the stages of human existence that leads humanity to the origins of its creation, ultimately leading it to realize that it is not the only being in this world. Consequently, they realize that they live in a social environment where people depend on one another.

He also develops a semantic analysis of the word ‘alaq (verse 2), which does not merely mean “a clot of blood,” but also something that is dependent. This meaning points to the ontological nature

¹⁰ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, Vol. 15 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), Hlm. 461

of humanity as a being that cannot survive on its own. Thus, contemporary interpretation shifts the focus from the legitimacy of prophethood toward the development of a knowledge-based society that is socially responsible.

The word iqra' or the command to read in the series of verses above is repeated twice, namely in verses 1 and 3. According to Quraiys Shihab, the first command is intended as a command to learn about something unknown, while the second is a command to teach knowledge to others. This indicates that in the process of learning and teaching, maximum effort is required by utilizing all potential tools inherent in human beings. Once this knowledge is acquired through learning, the next mandate is to teach it, while continuing to utilize all such potential.¹¹

One important point that can be emphasized through this verse is that humans, as social beings, are creatures who constantly live alongside others (their community). They cannot realize their full potential on their own. Humans need others for this purpose, including to meet their needs. Thus, contemporary interpretations shift the focus from merely legitimizing prophethood toward building a knowledge-based society.

QS. Al-'Alaq verse 3 establishes the paradigm that an ideal society is a knowledge-based society. Knowledge is not merely a spiritual means but also an instrument of social emancipation. Based on the above interpretation, we can analyze that this verse emphasizes the importance of knowledge in a social context. It also indicates that humans, as social beings, have a responsibility to study and apply the knowledge Allah has granted, thereby fostering beneficial social interactions. Through knowledge, humans can make positive contributions to society and create a better environment.

As individuals, humans cannot easily achieve everything they desire without the help of others. Allah states in QS. Az-Zukhruf: 32

أَلَمْ يَفْصِلُوا رَحْمَتَ رَبِّكَ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُلْخِيًّا وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ

"Do they divide the bounty of your Lord? We have apportioned their livelihood among them in this worldly life, and We have exalted some of them above others in degrees, so that some of them may employ others. And the bounty of your Lord is better than what they amass" (Surah Az-Zukhruf: 32).

This verse indicates that humans were not created with the same talents and abilities. If everyone possessed identical skills and potential, then they would not require assistance from others, which in turn would eliminate the existence of interaction or the exchange of services. Allah SWT created humans with different potentials and strengths, thereby making everyone need one another and fostering a desire to collaborate.

Humans within their social groups, such as in a nation-state, are bound by norms resulting from human interaction itself. Interest in norms also includes an interest in respecting the existence of others.

¹¹ Isnaini, Muhammad. *Konsep Belajar dalam Al-Qur'an surat Al-Alaq ayat 1-5 (Studi Tafsir Al- Misbah)* dalam Jurnal Arfannur: Journal of Islamic Education, Vol.1, No. 1, 2020, Hlm. 98

Thus, just as fundamental human rights emerge in the individual dimension, fundamental human obligations emerge in the social dimension. Fundamental human obligations include respecting the fundamental rights of others and adhering to the norms prevailing in one's society.

According to Al-Tabari, this verse serves as a rebuttal to the Quraysh who questioned Muhammad's prophethood because he did not come from the elite circles of Mecca. Allah affirms that the distribution of blessings and status is His exclusive prerogative.¹²

Then, Imam Ath-Thabari cited several opinions of scholars of Ta'wil in his book, which concludes that Let him take his own means that one individual is beneficial to another, Ath-Thabari says "and what is in the hand of this one returns to that one," meaning that Allah SWT has made some people a means for others in terms of worldly sustenance. As for Ibn Kathir, he explains that differences in social status are part of the divine order so that people may depend on one another and cooperate.¹³ Thus, classical exegesis interprets this verse as legitimizing divine justice in social distribution.

From the perspective of Contemporary Exegesis, Quraish Shihab emphasizes that this verse contains a critique of the materialistic mentality that equates wealth with honor.¹⁴ According to him, social differences are not meant to create domination, but rather to build a harmonious system of interdependence.¹⁵ This verse contains an egalitarian message that true honor is not determined by wealth, but by moral quality and piety.

Thus, the author can conduct a comparative analysis showing that interpretations of this verse in classical exegesis emphasize the legitimacy of the distribution of God's bounties. In contemporary exegesis, however, this verse highlights a critique of capital-based social stratification. Therefore, we can draw the lesson that Surah Az-Zukhruf, verse 32, establishes a social paradigm in which social differences should lead to cooperation, not exploitation.

Based on an interpretive analysis of QS Surah Al-'Alaq verse 3 and QS Surah Az-Zukhruf verse 32, a Qur'anic social paradigm can be formulated that rests on three main pillars:

1. Epistemological Pillar: Knowledge as the Foundation of Life

QS Al-'Alaq verse 3 (*Iqra' wa rabbuka al-akram*) affirms that humanity is honored through knowledge. In Tafsir al-Tabari, Imam al-Tabari explains that the command to read marks the beginning of the prophetic mission and the foundation for the formation of a community based on revelation.¹⁶ Similarly, Ibn Kathir in Tafsir Ibn Kathir asserts that humanity's nobility compared to other creatures lies in the ability to receive and develop knowledge.¹⁷ From a contemporary perspective, M. Quraish Shihab in Tafsir Al-Mishbah expands the meaning of "iqra'" to encompass both reading texts and interpreting social reality.¹⁸

¹² Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, Tafsir Ath-Thabari, (Jakarta: Pustaka Azzam, 2009, hlm. 35.

¹³ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, Jil. 7, 223.

¹⁴ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, Vol. 13 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 510.

¹⁵ Ibid, Hlm. 512

¹⁶ Al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn. *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*. Juz 32. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, t.t.

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Shihab, M. Quraish. *Tafsir al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, Vol. 15. Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002.

Thus, it can be formulated that the ideal society according to the Qur'an is a knowledge-based society, not one based on power, wealth, or domination. Knowledge, from a Qur'anic perspective, is not merely the accumulation of information, but a means for fostering social consciousness and moral responsibility.

2. The Pillar of Functional Differentiation: Interdependence as Sunnatullah

Surah Az-Zukhruf, verse 32, states that Allah distributes sustenance and elevates some people above others so that they may benefit from one another. According to Imam al-Tabari, the phrase *liyattakhidha ba'dhum ba'dan sukhriyyan* means that people need one another in their worldly lives. Ibn Kathir explains that this difference is not a form of discrimination, but rather a social mechanism so that people do not live in isolation. In classical exegesis As in Al-Qurtubi's *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, this verse is understood as a divine law (sunnatullah) regarding the existence of differing social conditions in human life.¹⁹ Differences in economic status and capabilities are not a form of injustice, but rather Allah's way of organizing life so that people depend on one another and cooperate. Thus, social life is built on the basis of mutual dependence, not destructive competition.

Meanwhile, in the modern exegesis *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* by Sayyid Qutb, it is explained that differences in provision aim to create balance and harmony in society, not to justify oppression or domination by a particular group.²⁰ The inequality mentioned in the verse is not a justification for exploitation, but a recognition that everyone has a different social role. If that difference turns into a tool of domination, as in the exploitative practices of capitalism, then such a condition is not in line with the values of justice taught by the Qur'an. From the perspective of M. Quraish Shihab, social differentiation is not intended for domination, but for harmonious cooperation. Thus, the Qur'an does not teach absolute egalitarianism (that everyone must be the same), but differentiation oriented toward collaboration, not exploitation.

3. Pillars of Tawhid Ethics: Moral Control Over Social Structures A synthesis of the two verses indicates that:

- Knowledge (QS Al-'Alaq: 3) shapes consciousness.
- Social differentiation (QS Az-Zukhruf: 32) shapes structure.

However, both must be guided by the principle of tawhid so as not to degenerate into class domination or economic exploitation. This paradigm aligns with Ibn Khaldun's theory of social solidarity, which states that civilization is founded on collective interactions bound by moral values. Human beings as social being from a Qur'anic perspective, not merely creatures that live in groups, but beings bound by moral responsibility in their social interactions.

¹⁹ Al-Qurtubī, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad. *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*. Juz. 16 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2006)

²⁰ Qutb, Sayyid. *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*. Jilid 6. Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 2003.

A synthesis of these two verses indicates that the Qur'an establishes a social paradigm with three main foundations. First, from an intellectual perspective, an ideal society is one that makes knowledge the foundation of social dignity and progress. Second, from a social perspective, differences in economic capacity and status are not forms of injustice, but rather Allah's decree so that people may depend on one another, cooperate, and build solidarity. Third, from a moral perspective, social relationships should be based on the values of justice and the common good, not on individualistic attitudes or the mere pursuit of material gain.

In the context of contemporary life, this paradigm offers relevant solutions to various social issues. Based on the analysis from this study, three main problems emerge. First, the global literacy crisis leading to low-quality human resources. This crisis, which impacts the quality of human resources, can be addressed by reviving the spirit of "iqra'" as a social movement that promotes a culture of reading and learning. Second, the widening economic inequality resulting from neoliberal capitalism can be critiqued through the principle of interdependence in QS. Az-Zukhruf verse 32. The widening economic inequality caused by an exploitative capitalist system must also be critiqued by understanding that differences in provision should foster cooperation and the equitable distribution of benefits, not monopoly and control by a select few. Third, the rise of individualism in modern society can be addressed by reaffirming that humans are fundamentally social beings who complement and depend on one another.

Thus, the construction of a Qur'anic social paradigm based on a synthesis of Surah Al-'Alaq, verse 3, and Surah Az-Zukhruf, verse 32, affirms that, from the Qur'an's perspective, human beings are social beings who are honored through knowledge and perfected through interdependent relationships. The author hopes that this study is not merely theologically normative but also has practical relevance in addressing contemporary social challenges.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of QS. Al-'Alaq verse 3 and QS. Az-Zukhruf verse 32 from classical and contemporary exegetical perspectives, several conclusions can be drawn that address the research questions.

First, from the classical exegetical perspective, QS. Al-'Alaq verse 3 is understood as the epistemological foundation of Islam, emphasizing the importance of knowledge as a divine gift. Classical exegetes such as al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir interpret the command "iqra'" as both the legitimization of the prophetic mission and an affirmation that human dignity lies in the ability to receive and develop knowledge. Meanwhile, from a contemporary exegetical perspective, the meaning of this verse is expanded to include an encouragement to interpret social reality and build a knowledge-based society. Thus, QS. Al-'Alaq verse 3 speaks not only of revelation but also of humanity's social responsibility to develop knowledge for the common good.

Second, Surah Az-Zukhruf, verse 32, is understood in classical exegesis as an affirmation that differences in status, ability, and provision are part of God's divine order, intended to ensure that people depend on one another and cooperate. This distribution is not a form of injustice, but rather a divine mechanism for building social structures. In contemporary exegesis, this verse is also interpreted as a critique of materialistic mentalities and wealth-based social stratification. Social differences are not intended to give rise to domination or exploitation, but to create a harmonious and just system of interdependence.

Third, the synthesis of these two verses gives rise to a Qur'anic social paradigm grounded in three core principles: knowledge as the foundation of civilization, social differentiation as a mechanism for cooperation, and the value of tawhid as a moral check on social structures. This paradigm affirms that, from the Qur'an's perspective, human beings are social beings who are honored through knowledge and perfected through interdependent relationships grounded in justice.

In the contemporary social context, this paradigm is relevant for addressing various current issues. The global literacy crisis can be addressed by reviving the spirit of "*iqra*" as a social movement that promotes a culture of reading and critical thinking. Economic inequality resulting from an exploitative capitalist system can be critiqued through the understanding that differences in provision should foster collaboration and the equitable distribution of benefits, not the monopoly of economic power. Meanwhile, the rise of individualism and social fragmentation in the digital age can be addressed by reaffirming that humans are created to live in complementary social relationships and to be morally responsible.

Thus, this study affirms that the Qur'an not only provides spiritual teachings but also establishes a transformative and timeless social framework. It is hoped that this study can serve as a starting point for the development of more contextual thematic exegesis, particularly in integrating the social values of the Qur'an with the realities of modern society. Therefore, further in-depth and interdisciplinary research is needed so that the Qur'anic social paradigm is not only understood theoretically but can also be effectively implemented in addressing the challenges of literacy crises, economic inequality, and rising individualism in the contemporary era.

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