

Epistemology of Living the Qur'an in Dakwah and Education

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Abstract

This article discusses the epistemology of the Living Qur'an in da'wah by placing the Qur'an not only as a normative text to be interpreted, but also as a revelation that is received, responded to, practiced, and institutionalized in the social life of the community. In the development of contemporary Qur'anic studies in Indonesia, the Living Qur'an has developed into an important field of study that captures the reception, performativity, transmission, and social transformation based on the presence of the Qur'an in the living space of society. The main problem of this article is how the epistemological foundation of the Living Qur'an can be used as a theoretical and practical basis for dialogical, contextual, and transformative da'wah. This research uses a qualitative approach based on a literature study with a descriptive-critical analysis of the literature on the Living Qur'an, anthropology of the Qur'an, reception of the holy book, and transformative da'wah. This article argues that the epistemology of the Living Qur'an in da'wah is built on an integrative relationship between revelation as a normative horizon, social reality as an arena for the manifestation of Qur'anic values, and the subject of da'wah as a mediator of transformation. Within this framework, da'wah is not simply understood as the transmission of a religious message, but also as a critical reading of how society brings the Qur'an to life, an evaluation of its practical orientation, and the reinforcement of Qur'anic values in personal and social life. Thus, the Living Qur'an provides an epistemological basis for the development of empirical, reflective, corrective, and transformative da'wah.

Keywords: Living Qur'an, Epistemology, Da'wah, Reception of The Qur'an, Transformative Da'wah

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an resembles a boundless ocean whose depths are further revealed the more it is studied, including in the development of da'wah methods. The da'wah methods formulated need to be tested and refined through da'wah laboratories, then applied to specific communities as pilot projects to measure their effectiveness, strengths, and challenges. The community-based development model successfully implemented by St. Francis Xavier University in Canada, which directly researches community potential, refines it in a laboratory setting, and then disseminates it internationally, could serve as an inspiring model to be adopted in the Living Qur'an project as well as Cultural Da'wah studies in Indonesia (Shiddieqy & Amrifin, 2025).

The development of contemporary Qur'anic studies shows a significant shift from a solely text-centered approach to one that also pays attention to the social life of the text. While classical and modern exegesis studies generally focus on linguistic meaning, the context in which verses were revealed, the structure of discourse, and scholars' explanations of the verses' content, the Living Qur'an approach asks further questions: how the Qur'an is presented in the lives of the people, how it is interpreted in everyday practice, and how a community builds symbolic and practical relationships with revelation. Ahmad Rafiq emphasizes that the Living Qur'an needs to be understood as an area of study that is not sufficient to be described only

at the level of phenomena, but requires a clearer epistemological and methodological foundation because it speaks of the relationship between the holy book and the community that lives it ([Rafiq, 2021](#)).

In the Indonesian context, the Living Qur'an approach holds significant importance because the religious life of Indonesian Muslims is rich with various forms of Qur'anic reception. The Qur'an is present not only in tafsir forums, halaqah (Islamic circle), or academic discussions, but also in family rituals, Islamic boarding school traditions, healing rooms, digital media, calligraphy, collective tadarus (recitation), death commemorations, children's education, and mosque-based social activities. Heddy Shri Ahimsa-Putra emphasized that the living Qur'an can be understood as the meanings that society gives to the Qur'an and how these meanings are actualized in everyday life. Thus, a Living Qur'an is one that exists as a social and cultural reality, not merely as a mushaf or a text to be read ([Putra, 2012](#)).

Lievrouw and Livingstone provide a highly valuable theoretical contribution from the perspective of new media theory by highlighting five fundamental characteristics of digital media that qualitatively distinguish it from conventional mass media. These five characteristics are: interactivity that enables two-way communication in real-time, hypertextuality that creates a non-linear network of meaning, multimediality that integrates various content formats within a single platform, network connectivity that eliminates geographical boundaries, and personalization capability that allows content to be tailored according to individual user preferences. Each of these characteristics carries highly concrete implications for the way da'wah messages are constructed and disseminated ([Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006](#)).

At the same time, the field of da'wah is facing major changes. Da'wah is no longer adequate if limited to the activity of preaching or the one-way delivery of religious messages. The contemporary social landscape is characterized by a plurality of values, changes in media, the commodification of religious symbols, a crisis of religious authority, and socio-economic problems that demand da'wah to be present not merely as a normative voice, but also as a force for social reading and transformation. At this point, the Living Qur'an becomes relevant because it provides a way for da'wah to understand how the Qur'an truly lives in society, how it is received, for what purposes it functions, and the extent to which these practices foster or obscure Qur'anic values. Khasanah explicitly positions the Living Qur'an method as a part or a subsystem of transformative da'wah because this approach emphasizes the application of the Qur'an in people's lives and its social impact ([Khasanah, 2019](#)).

The academic problem that arises is that many writings on the Living Qur'an still stop at describing phenomena. Various social practices that use Qur'anic verses are documented and mapped, but not always adequately explained: what their knowledge base is, how the validity of their interpretation is tested, and how the social data relates to the normative horizon of the Qur'an. As a result, the study of the Living Qur'an sometimes moves to two extremes. On the one hand, there is a tendency to accept all social phenomena related to the Qur'an as legitimate religious expressions without normative criticism. On the other hand, there is a tendency to reject them too quickly in the name of textual purity without understanding the social structures of meaning at work behind these practices. This criticism appears, for example, in the writings of Abdul Ghoni and Gazi Saloom, who emphasize the need to refine the Living Qur'anic method by continuing to refer to the Qur'anic text so that the study does not contradict the normative function of the holy book itself ([Ghoni & Saloom, 2021](#)).

Based on this background, this article starts from the thesis that the Living Qur'an needs to be formulated not only as an object of research, but also as an epistemology of da'wah. This means that the Living Qur'an can be used as a basis for acquiring knowledge about da'wah in society: how people understand revelation, how Qur'anic values work in life experiences, how Qur'anic symbols shape social behavior, and how da'wah can direct all of this towards a more ethical and substantive transformation. From here, the

formulation of the problem of this article can be emphasized as follows: how is the epistemology of the Living Qur'an constructed within the framework of da'wah, and what are its implications for the development of contemporary da'wah? The novelty of this article lies in its attempt to formulate the Living Qur'an not merely as a research approach to the reception of the Qur'an, but as an epistemological framework for da'wah that integrates text, context, reception, normative criticism, and a transformational orientation. Thus, this article not only maps the Living Qur'an as a field of Qur'anic study, but also emphasizes its contribution to formulating a more empirical, reflective, and transformative da'wah paradigm.

The development of this argument also places the Living Qur'an within a broader conversation about lived scripture. In contemporary biblical studies, the authority of revelation is not understood solely as the authority of the written text, but also as an authority that operates through memorization, listening, reading, copying, ritual, habitus, and social institutionalization. William A. Graham and Wilfred Cantwell Smith demonstrate that scripture always lives within a community of interpreters and practitioners; therefore, the relationship between text and life should not be sharply separated (Graham, 1987; Smith, 1993). Based on this, da'wah based on the Living Qur'an can be read as an effort to connect the normativity of revelation with an ever-changing social life.

In general, the literature on the Living Qur'an in Indonesia can be divided into three streams. First, the definitional-methodological stream, which seeks to explain what is meant by the Living Qur'an, the scope of its study, and the approaches that can be used to examine it. Within this stream, Ahimsa-Putra's writings occupy a crucial position because they emphasize that the Living Qur'an is a sociocultural phenomenon related to the meaning society gives to the Qur'an and the actualization of that meaning in everyday life (Putra, 2012). Rafiq's writing continues this trend by making clear that the Living Qur'an requires a more mature epistemological and methodological infrastructure, while also offering a reading of the scripture's informative and performative functions (Rafiq, 2021). Research objectives are to formulate the epistemological foundation of the Living Qur'an as a theoretical and practical basis for da'wah. This study aims to construct the epistemological framework of the Living Qur'an by positioning the Qur'an not merely as a normative text, but as a revelation that is received, practiced, and institutionalized within the social life of the community, so that it can serve as a foundation for the development of dialogical, contextual, and transformative da'wah.

To analyze the integrative relationship between the Living Qur'an and transformative da'wah. This study aims to explain how the epistemology of the Living Qur'an can function as an epistemic instrument of da'wah through five main components, namely: revelation as a normative horizon, social reality as an arena of value manifestation, reception as an analytical category, normative critique as a validation mechanism, and transformation as an axiological goal, in order to produce da'wah that is more empirical, reflective, and corrective. To develop an operationalization model of da'wah based on the Living Qur'an epistemology in the context of education and the digital era. This study aims to offer a practical da'wah model by mapping the patterns of Qur'anic reception within society, evaluating the practical orientation of its religiosity, and designing strategies for strengthening Qur'anic values in personal and social life, Islamic educational institutions, as well as contemporary digital media spaces.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method based on literature review. This method was chosen because the article's focus is conceptual-theoretical, namely examining the epistemological foundations of the Living Qur'an and its relationship to da'wah. The literature review allows the author to systematically examine ideas from various primary and secondary sources, compare existing arguments, and then compile them into a more

complete conceptual synthesis. This research model aligns with a number of articles that also discuss the epistemology of the Living Qur'an and its relevance to sustainable da'wah strategies.

The primary data sources for this study were academic articles on the Living Qur'an, Qur'anic reception, Qur'anic study methodology, and transformative da'wah. The literature was selected based on three considerations: first, its direct relevance to the epistemological theme of the Living Qur'an; second, its contribution to the discussion of the relationship between text and social practice; third, its usefulness in explaining the orientation of da'wah. In developing this manuscript, references were also expanded to articles from internationally reputable journals widely listed in the Scopus index, such as *American Ethnologist*, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Ethnomusicology*, *Social Anthropology*, *Contemporary Islam*, *Culture and Religion*, and *Indonesia and the Malay World*, as well as academic monographs from university presses and major scholarly publishers. Data were collected through in-depth reading, noting key concepts, and classifying ideas based on epistemological categories: sources of knowledge, objects of knowledge, methods of acquiring knowledge, validity of knowledge, and goals of knowledge.

The analysis was conducted descriptively and critically. Descriptive analysis means presenting the authors' views proportionally; critical analysis means assessing the limitations, common ground, and implications of those views. The analysis was carried out in three steps. First, identifying key concepts such as revelation, reception, praxis, performativity, transmission, transformation, and da'wah. Second, mapping the relationships between concepts to see how the Living Qur'an works as a means of gaining knowledge about the religious life of society. Third, conducting a theoretical synthesis that formulated the Living Qur'an as an epistemological basis for contextual and transformative da'wah.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Living Qur'an: From Text Study to Life Study

In general, Qur'anic studies can be divided into two major trends. The first trend focuses on the text: language, *qira'at*, *asbab al-nuzul*, *munasabah*, structure of meaning, and interpretation. The second trend focuses on the social life of the text: how the Qur'an is received, read, heard, ritualized, institutionalized, or used in daily practice. The Living Qur'an develops from this second trend. It does not replace interpretation, but expands the horizon of Qur'anic studies from the question of "what is the meaning of the verse" to also asking "how the verse is lived by society." Rafiq emphasizes that the Living Qur'an needs to be understood by mapping the relationship between the holy book and its community, including the patterns of transmission and transformation of knowledge, practices, and discourses that shape Qur'anic reception (Rafiq, 2021).

One of Rafiq's important contributions is the distinction between the informative and performative functions of the holy book. The informative function is seen when the Qur'an is positioned as a source of knowledge, meaning, and interpretation. Here, a person interacts with the Qur'an to understand its normative, theological, legal, or moral messages. Meanwhile, the performative function is seen when the Qur'an is read, recited, written, displayed, used in rituals, or used as a medium for protection, blessings, and social identity. In the lives of Muslims, these two functions often overlap. A Muslim may recite a particular chapter with confidence in its virtue, without always making a clear distinction between the meaning and the performance aspects (Rafiq, 2021).

In Indonesia, the forms of this reception are very diverse. The traditions of *tahlilan*, *yasinan* (recitation of the Qur'an), *semaan* (recitation of the Qur'an), collective memorization, *ruqyah* (religious exhortation), the use of verses in medicine, mosque calligraphy, recitation competitions, and digital Qur'anic content are examples of how the Qur'an is present as a living reality. Ahimsa-Putra reminds us that the living

Qur'an as a social phenomenon can be read various anthropological perspectives, such as acculturation, diffusion, functionalism, structural-functionalism, phenomenology, and hermeneutic. This means that the living Qur'an speaks not only of religious doctrine, but also of the social and cultural processes that give concrete form to religious experience (Putra, 2012).

This view is enriched by methodological studies that emphasize that the Living Qur'an needs to be understood as both an object of study and a methodology. Aji, Hilmi, and Rahman demonstrate that Living Qur'an research addresses at least four domains of expression: oral, aural, written, and behavioral. The Qur'an lives in reading, in listening, in visual representation, and in social action. These four domains are crucial for da'wah (Islamic preaching), as they demonstrate that the internalization of the Qur'an occurs not only through rational explanation, but also through sound habits, visual symbols, and behavioral habituation (Rahman, 2021).

In the oral and aural realms, the Qur'an is not only read as a meaningful text, but also experienced as a voice that shapes religious feeling, discipline, memory, and authority. Kristina Nelson's studies on the art of recitation, Anna M. Gade's studies on learning and emotion in Qur'anic recitation in Indonesia, and Anne K. Rasmussen's studies on recitation in Indonesian public life show that Qur'anic recitation is a socio-pedagogical process involving the body, aesthetics, the teacher's authority, and community recognition (Rasmussen, 2010). Thus, the Living Qur'an has a sensory and affective dimension that is very important for da'wah: the Qur'anic message is not only absorbed through conceptual understanding, but also through hearing, repetition, the atmosphere of the assembly, the discipline of practice, and collective experience.

Epistemological Foundation of the Living Qur'an

Epistemology essentially deals with the sources, methods, limits, and validity of knowledge. When this perspective is applied to the Living Qur'an, the key questions are: where does knowledge about the Living Qur'an come from? What is its object? How is it researched? And how are the research results validated? Answering these questions is crucial to understanding the Living Qur'an not merely as an academic fad, but as a field of knowledge with a clear foundation.

First, the primary normative source in the epistemology of the Living Qur'an remains the Qur'an. This is the most crucial point so that the study of the Living Qur'an is not uprooted from the study of the Qur'an itself. The existence of social practices associated with the Qur'an does not automatically make them an ideal representation of the Qur'anic message. Therefore, revelation still functions as a normative horizon that assesses and directs the reading of social reality. Ghoni and Saloom emphasize that the results of Living Qur'an research should still be referred to the text of the Qur'an so as not to conflict with the normative function and ethical mission of the holy book (Ghoni & Saloom, 2021).

Second, the formal object of the Living Qur'an is the social reality that arises from society's interaction with the Qur'an. Ahimsa-Putra refers to this as the meaning society gives to the Qur'an and its actualization in everyday life. Thus, what is studied is not only external events, such as the tradition of reciting a particular surah, but also the structure of meaning that accompanies them: the underlying beliefs, the expected functions, the legitimizing authority, and the resulting social impact (Putra, 2012). Thus, the Living Qur'an brings the study of the Qur'an into the realm of the social sciences and humanities. It cannot be handled solely with classical exegetical tools, but requires the assistance of anthropology, the sociology of religion, phenomenology, and social hermeneutics. The assistance of the social sciences here is not merely an additional tool, but part of a way of understanding how religious authority is realized. Matthew Engelke shows that the authority of scripture can operate even when the text is not always the explicit center of ritual practice (Engelke, 2004). Webb Keane emphasizes the importance of materiality and sensory experience in

understanding religion, while Birgit Meyer explains that the experience of religious presence is always mediated by particular forms of sensation, technology, and semiotic ideology. This framework helps the Living Qur'an read the *mushaf*, the sound of recitation, calligraphy, gadgets, da'wah platforms, and digital space as mediums that help shape the way people experience the Qur'an.

Third, the methods of knowledge acquisition in the Living Qur'an commonly utilize observation, interviews, documentation, ethnography, and phenomenology. Aji, Hilmi, and Rahman emphasize that Living Qur'an research commonly uses social research tools to capture the phenomenon of Qur'anic reception as it exists in certain communities. The literature also shows that the Living Qur'an approach tries to capture the process of interaction between society and the Qur'an, not only discussing the textual meaning, but also emphasizing the application of the Qur'anic text in everyday life. Thus, the epistemology of the Living Qur'an is interdisciplinary: it takes the normative horizon of Qur'anic studies, while utilizing the empirical tools of the social sciences (Rahman, 2021).

Fourth, the most complex issue in the Living Qur'an is validity. Is a practice that exists in society automatically valid as a representation of the Qur'an? Here, it is necessary to distinguish two types of validity. First, descriptive validity, namely validity as social data. If a practice is actually carried out, inherited, and has meaning for society, then it is valid as a Living Qur'an phenomenon. Second, normative validity, namely the conformity of the practice with the ethical horizon and objectives of the Qur'an. This distinction is important so that the study of the Living Qur'an does not fall into cultural relativism or anti-reality puritanism. Ghoni and Saloom argue that the idealization of the Living Qur'an method lies in the effort to combine research on social phenomena with reference to the Qur'anic text (Ghoni & Saloom, 2021).

Fifth, the goal of knowledge in the epistemology of the Living Qur'an does not stop at description. Knowledge of how the Qur'an lives in society should be used to read religious orientations, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and then formulate corrective and transformative steps. It is at this point that the Living Qur'an is very close to da'wah: both move from text to life, and from life back to affirming the value of revelation.

Conceptually, the epistemological reading of the Living Qur'an can be divided into two complementary orientations. First, the Living Qur'an orientation, namely a bottom-up movement that starts from social practices, community experiences, reading traditions, objects, sounds, media, and institutions that make the Qur'an present in life. Second, the living-the-Qur'an orientation, namely a top-down movement that starts from the values of revelation, interpretation, Qur'anic ethics, and the normative goals of da'wah. The integration of the two gives birth to the framework of living the Qur'an through the living Qur'an: da'wah reads the Qur'anic practices that live in society, then directs them to be more aligned with the values of monotheism, justice, mercy, knowledge, and welfare.

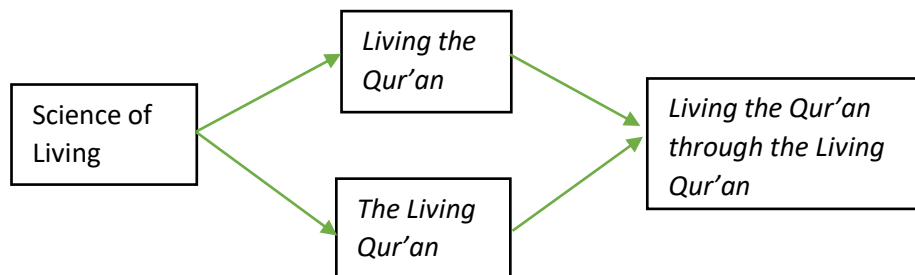


Figure 1. Classification of the Living Sciences of the Qur'an

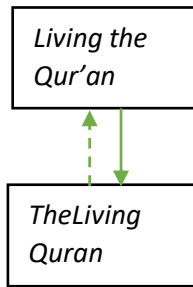


Figure 2. Living Qur'an study flow

Da'wah as an Epistemic and Transformational Process

Da'wah is commonly understood as the activity of calling people to the path of God. However, this definition needs to be expanded. Da'wah is not merely normative communication, but also an epistemic process: it requires knowledge of people, culture, symbols, social needs, and the forms of acceptance of religious teachings. Da'wah that relies solely on evidence without understanding the realities of society will lose relevance. Conversely, da'wah that adapts too much to reality without a normative horizon will lose its direction. Da'wah also operates at the level of subject formation and moral sensorium. Hirschkind, through his study of the practice of listening to audiotapes of sermons in Egypt, shows that religious listening can be an ethical exercise that shapes a Muslim's feelings, emotions, and self-orientation (Hirschkind, 2001). Saba Mahmood, through her study of women's piety movements, shows that piety involves not only cognitive assent to doctrine but also bodily discipline, habits, and self-development (Mahmood, 2005). By reading da'wah from this perspective, the Living Qur'an helps the *da'i* understand that Qur'anic transformation occurs through knowledge, practice, atmosphere, media, and repeated habits.

From this perspective, the Living Qur'an makes an important contribution to da'wah because it allows da'wah to read the map of the Qur'an's reception in society. Da'wah becomes aware of the existing relationship between society and the Qur'an: whether people are closer to recitation, to symbols, to ethical understanding, to rituals, or to specific pragmatic functions. This kind of knowledge determines da'wah strategies. Communities with a tradition of collective recitation, for example, require different strategies than those that interact more with the Qur'an through social media citations. In relation to transformation, da'wah (preaching) is not limited to just sermons. Ahmad Shofi Muhyiddin demonstrated in his study of the transformative da'wah of *kiai* that changes in da'wah strategies, methods, and orientation contribute to social transformation within the community (Muhyiddin, 2019). Transformative da'wah links the dissemination of religious teachings with social assistance, community empowerment, and concrete movements for change. In this context, da'wah does not stop at *tabligh*, but enters into the process of building a more just and dignified social structure.

When combined with the Living Qur'an, transformative da'wah gains a stronger empirical basis. It does not proceed from abstract assumptions about society, but from a concrete reading of how revelation is being lived out. Therefore, the Living Qur'an can function as an epistemology of da'wah: it provides data, maps of meaning, and symbolic capital that can be used to design more effective and transformative da'wah. Khasanah emphasizes that the Living Qur'an as part of transformative da'wah is oriented towards the application of the Qur'an in daily life (Khasanah, 2019). This means that the success of da'wah is measured not only by how many messages are delivered, but also by how fully Qur'anic values are embodied in the practices of life, social relations, and the culture of the community. Within this framework, da'wah is no longer merely verbal communication, but rather a process of building a Qur'anic habitus.

The Relationship between the Living Qur'an and Da'wah

The relationship between the Living Qur'an and da'wah can be explained through several layers. First, the Living Qur'an functions as a reception map. It helps da'wah understand how society interprets the Qur'an. This reception can be intellectual, ritual, aesthetic, symbolic, or practical. Rafiq emphasizes that Qur'anic reception is formed through patterns of transmission and transformation that connect knowledge, practice, and discourse. Da'wah that understands this reception map will be more sensitive in choosing language, media, and strategies.

Second, the Living Qur'an serves as a socio-religious diagnosis. The Living Qur'an approach not only captures what exists but can also be used to assess a society's religious orientation. Does people's interaction with the Qur'an strengthen morals, knowledge, and social awareness? Or is that interaction predominantly ceremonial, symbolic, or even magical? The literature shows that the Living Qur'an in transformative da'wah must be viewed from its impact on social life, both individual and collective. Thus, the Living Qur'an provides a very useful diagnosis for da'wah.

Third, the Living Qur'an serves as an entry point for transformation. Successful da'wah is usually not one that cuts across traditions, but one that can read traditions as a gateway to transformation. Once a community has developed the habit of collectively reading the Qur'an, da'wah can direct it so that this tradition is connected to an understanding of its content, social ethics, solidarity, and the strengthening of Qur'anic literacy. In this way, da'wah does not operate from a vacuum, but rather from the already living cultural capital of the Qur'an.

In the Indonesian context, this Qur'anic cultural capital is often intertwined with Islamic public spaces, piety markets, and popular media. Noorhaidi Hasan shows that public Islam in Indonesia develops through a combination of piety, social agency, commodification, and Muslim middle-class networks ([Hasan, 2009](#)). This finding is important for da'wah because it demonstrates that the reception of the Qur'an does not always operate within a purely religious space; it also touches on social aspirations, class identities, the symbolic economy, and consumer culture. Living Qur'an-based da'wah needs to be able to distinguish between strengthening Qur'anic values and merely commodifying Qur'anic symbols.

Fourth, the Living Qur'an serves as a correction to verbalistic da'wah practices. Many da'wah practices still focus on one-way delivery. The Living Qur'an paradigm reminds us that the internalization of revelation also occurs through sounds, habits, visual symbols, social gestures, and repetitive rituals. Therefore, effective da'wah needs to move beyond mere teaching to habituation, performativity, and the institutionalization of values. Aji, Hilmi, and Rahman's formulation of the oral, aural, written, and behavioral domains provides a strong methodological basis for understanding the breadth of these channels of Qur'anic internalization ([Rahman, 2021](#)).

Fifth, the Living Qur'an broadens the horizons of da'wah evaluation. Until now, the success of da'wah work has often been measured quantitatively: the number of congregations, the number of congregants, or the intensity of message delivery. The Living Qur'an approach encourages a more substantive approach: how the verses of the Qur'an truly influence the community's way of life, social ethics, solidarity, and religious orientation. Here, the quality of reception is more important than the sheer volume of activity.

Epistemological Model of Living Qur'an in Da'wah

Based on the above reading, the epistemology of the Living Qur'an in da'wah can be formulated through five main components. First, revelation as a normative horizon. Every da'wah practice must be grounded in the recognition that the Qur'an is a source of values. This is not merely a theological statement, but rather an epistemological foundation to prevent da'wah from being dragged into cultural neglect. All

forms of social reception of the Qur'an must be read within the horizon of ethics, monotheism, justice, mercy, and welfare, which are the primary orientations of Qur'anic teachings (Ghoni & Saloom, 2021).

Second, social life as an arena for the manifestation of values. Qur'anic values do not exist in a vacuum. They are always embodied, negotiated, and practiced within culture and history. Therefore, social reality is an arena for the manifestation of values, not merely a religious external setting. The Living Qur'an helps *da'is* understand this arena concretely, respecting the complexity of societal experiences without losing their critical perspective.

Third, reception as an analytical category. Society's relationship with the Qur'an takes place through reception: interpretation, reading, chanting, ritualization, symbolization, or institutionalization. The category of reception allows *da'is* to understand that closeness to the Qur'an is not always synonymous with a deep understanding of its textual meaning. This closeness may take a more performative form. From this, *da'is* can assess which areas need strengthening: understanding, experience, or practical ethics.

Fourth, normative criticism as a validation mechanism. Not everything in life is ideal. Therefore, normative criticism is needed. This criticism is not merely rejection, but an evaluation based on the Qur'an and *maqāṣid* (principles). If a Qur'anic tradition fosters solidarity, disciplined worship, and moral awareness, then *da'wah* strengthens it. If a tradition tends to imprison the Qur'an in mere symbolism, *da'wah* needs to redirect it.

Fifth, transformation as an axiological goal. Knowledge of the Living Qur'an should not stop at academic description. The ultimate goal is transformation: changing individuals, cultures, and social structures to become more aligned with Qur'anic values. At this point, the Living Qur'an intersects with transformative *da'wah*. *Da'wah* is not just an activity of conveying religious message, but the work of changing the orientation of life by making revelation a moral driving force.

These five components demonstrate that the Living Qur'an in *da'wah* is integrative. It does not affirm ahistorical textual normativism, but neither does it succumb to social relativism. It recognizes social reality as a crucial arena for interpreting the Qur'an's power, while positioning revelation as a normative horizon that assesses, corrects, and directs social practice.

Implications for Contemporary Da'wah

This paradigm has several important implications for contemporary *da'wah*. First, *da'wah* needs to strengthen socio-religious literacy. A *da'i* (preacher) needs to not only master Islamic teachings but also understand society empirically. He or she needs to understand local traditions, religious symbols, media reception, and the authority structures operating within the community. This allows *da'wah* to move from monologue to dialogue.

Second, *da'wah* (Islamic preaching) needs to recognize that the Qur'an lives through many channels. It lives in reading, listening, writing, visual spaces, educational institutions, philanthropic activities, and even digital culture. Therefore, *da'wah* strategies need to be expanded: not just lectures, but also habituation, digital content curation, Qur'anic visual art, verse-based social movements, and strengthening learning spaces that allow the Qur'an to be lived in its entirety.

Third, *da'wah* needs to shift from a quick-judgment approach to understanding, evaluating, and then transforming. A tradition of reciting a particular surah, for example, cannot be simply judged as heretical or not. It's more productive to ask: what does that tradition mean to society, what values live within it, and how can it be directed closer to the substantive message of the Qur'an? Here, the Living Qur'an helps *da'wah* avoid simplification.

Fourth, in the digital era, the Living Qur'an has taken on new forms. Verses circulate in short videos, motivational quotes, digital posters, *murattal* broadcasts, instant da'wah content, and even visual commodification. This creates both opportunities and risks. The opportunity lies in expanding access and intensifying interaction with the verses. The risk is reducing the Qur'an to a slogan without depth of interpretation and ethics. Therefore, da'wah that stems from the epistemology of the Living Qur'an needs to take this phenomenon seriously: not rejecting it outright, but directing it toward a more responsible reception. The literature on digital religion shows that online religious practices cannot be understood as separate from offline life. Campbell calls digital religion a networked practice: community, authority, identity, and ritual move across online and offline spaces (Campbell, 2012). In the Indonesian context, Nisa shows how the One Day One Juz (ODOJ) movement utilizes WhatsApp to build a semi-virtual Qur'an reading movement (Cahyono et al., 2024). Slama, Husein, Slama, and Lengauer show how social media shapes piety, religious anxiety, and a new Islamic sociality, while this shows how digital visual da'wah can be highly effective but also carries the risk of exclusionary ideologization. All these findings strengthen the argument that contemporary da'wah must have digital literacy, interpretation literacy, and ethical skills to manage the reception of the Qur'an in the media space.

Fifth, this paradigm paves the way for field-based da'wah research. Qur'anic traditions in Islamic boarding schools, schools, Islamic hospitals, urban communities, women's assemblies, or digital spaces can serve as the basis for developing specific and contextual da'wah models. This will strengthen da'wah studies as a discipline that is not only normative, but also empirical and applicable.

Sixth, this approach aligns with strengthening religious moderation. Muhammad Yusuf demonstrated that the Living Qur'an can also contribute to the development of religious moderation in Indonesia (Yusuf, 2024). This is important because da'wah that is based on the experience of the Qur'an in social life has a greater opportunity to foster a religiosity that is down-to-earth, dialogical, and not easily drawn into ideological polarization.

Living Qur'an in Education

The implementation of the epistemology of the Living Qur'an in the field of education is one of the most tangible manifestations of the performative and informative functions of the holy book within society. The performative function in the world of education, particularly in educational institutions in Indonesia, is evident in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, ranging from MI to MA, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), and schools affiliated with Islamic-based community organizations or foundations, utilize the performative function, which is expressed through four domains: oral, aural, written, and behavioral practices.

In the oral and aural domains, the traditions of *tahfiz* (memorization) and *tilawah* (recitation) are not merely cognitive activities but sensory and affective processes involving hearing, emotion, and the aesthetics of sound. Through disciplined repetition of sounds, students not only absorb normative messages but also build a "*moral sensorium*" an ethical sensitivity formed through sensory experiences while interacting with revelation. This aligns with the argument that the recitation of the Qur'an in Indonesia is a socio-pedagogical process that shapes personal authority and community recognition.

This can be observed in several Islamic educational institutions that position memorization programs as both a point of distinction and a selling point for the school. This is evident in the curricula of integrated Islamic schools and Muhammadiyah schools, which feature graduates who have memorized *Juz* 30, and in some cases, up to three *juz*. This is reflected in the promotional materials they produce and the curricula they implement.



Figure 3. Prambanan SD MBS Flyer

The flyer features the slogan: “Proven memorization, guaranteed success.” This phrase is part of the school’s flagship program in the field of Qur’an memorization. SD Muhammadiyah “MBS” Prambanan integrates an enhanced curriculum through three main programs focused on literacy and the strengthening of religious character. The *Tahfizh* program is conducted regularly every day with graduation requirements including memorization of Juz 30 and 29, 100 hadiths, daily prayers, and *maḥfūzāt*. To support academic foundations, there is the *Tuntas Baca* program for first-grade students, focused on mastering reading skills within the first month of the school year. Additionally, the school implements the TAHTA (*Tahsin* and *Tahfizh* of the Qur’an) program, which not only emphasizes strong or *mutqin* memorization but also prioritizes fluent recitation in accordance with the rules of tajwid as a form of practicing the values of worship commanded in the revelation. This integration demonstrates that education at this institution is managed through oral and behavioral conditioning to foster a comprehensive Qur’anic habitus in the students.



Figure 4. Flyer for Ar-Rayyan Islamic Junior High School, Surabaya

According to the flyer, the flagship program is Qur'an memorization. The target for graduates is to memorize 10 *juz*. Qur'an memorization is an integral part of the curriculum and a daily practice for students. These two phenomena reinforce the fact that performative traditions in oral and aural forms are the main characteristics of Islamic education. The performative function in writing can be seen in the calligraphy displayed on the walls of Islamic educational institutions. This is further reinforced by the existence of calligraphy as an extracurricular activity. Furthermore, the Living Qur'an in education transforms into the formation of a Qur'anic habitus through social action (behavior). Education does not stop at the ability to read texts, but extends to how those texts influence students' life orientation and social ethics. For example, values of justice, solidarity, and the common good drawn from the normative horizon of revelation are integrated into daily school practices, such as a culture of philanthropy (charity), moderation in expressing opinions, and environmental conservation. Here, transformative da'wah plays a crucial role as a mediator that guides religious traditions in schools so they do not get trapped in mere symbolism, but rather lead to tangible behavioral change.

In the digital age, the educational challenges of the Living Qur'an have become increasingly complex with the emergence of new forms of reception on social media. Phenomena such as the One Day One *Juz* (ODOJ) movement or visual-based Qur'anic educational content demonstrate that educational authority is now networked, operating across both physical and virtual spaces. Educational institutions must be able to manage the risk of the Qur'an's meaning being reduced, a common occurrence in instant quotes on digital media, by strengthening students' interpretive literacy and media ethics. Thus, Living Qur'an-based education becomes an empirical, reflective, and transformative process; it does not merely produce individuals who memorize texts, but human beings capable of bringing the values of revelation to life as a moral driving force in the course of their lives.

Criticism and Limitations

While important, the Living Qur'an approach also has limitations. First, there is the risk of cultural romanticization. When everything living in a society is considered an expression of the Qur'an, Living Qur'an studies can lose their critical power. Here, the textual horizon remains necessary as a critical evaluative framework.

Second, there is a risk of excessive neutrality. Some Living Qur'an studies are rich in descriptive content, but lack axiological assessment. However, in the context of da'wah, such neutrality is insufficient. Da'wah requires ethical guidance so that empirical data does not remain as sterile knowledge and devoid of any orientation toward change. Ghoni and Saloom, in fact, remind us that when discrepancies are found between the reality of implementation and the study of the text, the process of refining the practice of Qur'anic values must be carried out simultaneously (Ghoni & Saloom, 2021).

Third, there is a risk of anti-contextual puritanism from readers who reject the Living Qur'an as too social and insufficiently textual. This criticism needs to be addressed by emphasizing that the Living Qur'an is not a substitute for interpretation, but rather a complement that examines how interpretation, practice, and culture intersect in the social history of the ummah.

Fourth, this approach demands interdisciplinary competence. Researchers and practitioners of da'wah (Islamic preaching) need to master both interpretation and social methodology. This challenge is formidable, but it also presents an opportunity for the integration of contemporary Islamic scholarship. Several recent studies even reaffirm the need to clarify the epistemological boundaries of the Living Qur'an so that it remains rooted in Islamic epistemology without losing its empirical rigor (Munawar et al., 2025).

Novelty Value

Briefly stated, the novelty of this article lies in three aspects. First, it shifts the position of the Living Qur'an from merely an object of reception study to an epistemological framework for da'wah. Second, it offers an integrative model of five components: revelation as a normative horizon, social reality as an arena of manifestation, reception as an analytical category, normative critique as a validation mechanism, and transformation as an axiological goal. Third, it emphasizes the operationalization of this model in da'wah practice, so that the Living Qur'an is discussed not only at the level of definition and method, but also at the level of social change design. Thus, the novelty of this article lies not in the invention of a new term, but in the formulation of a more systematic conceptual relationship between the study of the Living Qur'an and the contemporary da'wah paradigm.

Theoretical Contributions to the Science of Da'wah and Qur'anic Studies

Theoretically, this article makes at least three contributions. First, for Qur'anic studies, it emphasizes that the Living Qur'an should not be positioned as a peripheral area dealing only with religious folklore. Precisely because it examines how revelation lives in reality, the Living Qur'an expands the horizon of Qur'anic studies into the realm of social, cultural, and historical practice. In other words, it helps bridge normative Qur'anic discourse with the concrete experiences of Muslims.

Second, for the science of da'wah, this article offers the perspective that da'wah has a very strong epistemological dimension. Da'wah is not only about communication strategies, lecture methods, or institutional management, but also about how to acquire valid knowledge about the community being preached to. In this regard, the Living Qur'an serves as an epistemic tool for understanding patterns of religiosity, the reception of the holy book, and the potential for transformation within the community. This enriches the science of da'wah so that it is not merely normative-rhetorical, but also based on empirical readings of religious life.

Third, this article clarifies that dialogue between Qur'anic studies and da'wah studies needs to be built through an integrative framework. So far, the two have often run parallel: Qur'anic studies have focused on interpretation, Qur'anic understanding, or textual reception, while da'wah studies has focused on communication, broadcasting, guidance, and community development. By presenting the Living Qur'an as an epistemology of da'wah, this article attempts to bring the two together in a single working model: the text is read, the context is mapped, the reception is analyzed, normative criticism is conducted, and then transformation is designed. This model can serve as a basis for developing interdisciplinary research within the faculties of ushuluddin, da'wah, and the Qur'anic science and tafsir study program.

Operationalization of Paradigms in Da'wah Practice

To ensure the Living Qur'an epistemological model in da'wah (Islamic outreach) doesn't stop at the conceptual level, it needs to be operationalized into actionable steps that can be applied in practice. First, *da'i* or da'wah institutions must map the Qur'anic reception within the target community. This mapping encompasses the types of practices that exist, the actors who maintain them, the symbols used, the authorities at work, and the functions that society associates with the Qur'an. At this level, the Living Qur'an provides initial tools in the form of observations of recitation traditions, ritual practices, the use of verses in healing, education, and digital media. Without such mapping, da'wah often relies solely on general assumptions about society and fails to fully understand the available Qur'anic cultural capital.

Second, after mapping, da'wah needs to identify the practical orientation of these phenomena. Not all Qur'anic receptions are equal. Some are predominantly informative, encouraging understanding and

learning. Others are predominantly performative, emphasizing ritual, blessings, protection, or identity. Others move toward ethical-social orientations, such as promoting the practice of almsgiving, mutual cooperation, or educational services inspired by specific verses. This distinction is important because da'wah strategies cannot be standardized. Traditions that are strong in performance but weak in understanding require strengthening literacy. Conversely, communities with a strong tradition of study may be more in need of strengthening their social practices.

Third, da'wah needs to engage in normative dialogue. Normative dialogue is not a unilateral verdict, but rather a process of reconciling lived practices with the horizon of Qur'anic values. At this stage, the text is not used to bluntly break down culture, but to test and refine it. Traditions aligned with Qur'anic ethics are strengthened; those that are still partial are guided; and problematic ones are gradually corrected. With this approach, da'wah can maintain a balance between respect for social reality and fidelity to the orientation of revelation.

Fourth, the results of this normative dialogue need to be translated into mentoring programs. This is what distinguishes da'wah based on the Living Qur'an epistemology from da'wah that stops at sermons. If a community has a strong tradition of recitation, da'wah programs can be directed at deepening the meaning of verses, establishing family ethics, or strengthening social solidarity through recitation forums. If the community is closely connected to digital Qur'anic content, da'wah can include strengthening media etiquette, content curation, and deepening the context of verses so that they are not reduced to mere motivational slogans. In this way, da'wah moves from "reading phenomena" to "managing transformation."

Fifth, this paradigm demands continuous evaluation. The success of da'wah cannot be measured solely by the number of programs or the level of participation, but rather by changes in the quality of the community's reception of the Qur'an. Has their relationship with the Qur'an become more conscious, ethical, knowledgeable, and socially impactful? Are religious practices, once merely symbolic, beginning to move toward internalizing values? Questions like these demonstrate that the Living Qur'an is useful not only for academic description but also for designing substantive da'wah evaluations.

Further Research Agenda

As a conceptual draft, this article also opens up several further research agendas. First, field research is needed to test the Living Qur'an epistemological model in concrete communities. For example, we need to examine the reception patterns of the Qur'an in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) for memorization, urban religious study groups (*Majelis Taklim*), digital migration communities, women's groups, or mosque philanthropic networks. Such field research will determine whether the five-component model proposed in this article is truly operational and how it varies across different social contexts. Second, comparative research needs to be developed to compare traditional and digital Qur'anic reception. In many cases, the shift from physical to digital gatherings has not only changed the medium of da'wah but also the way the Qur'an is received. Verses that once lived in religious study forums now circulate as visual excerpts, video clips, or brief, contextless quotations. Comparative studies will help da'wah formulate more appropriate interventions within each media ecology.

The proposal to develop qualitative evaluation instruments for da'wah programs grounded in the Living Qur'an framework represents a meaningful methodological advancement. However, this proposition requires deeper scrutiny. While the researcher correctly identifies the limitations of administrative and quantitative evaluations, the suggested indicators such as "depth of understanding" and "quality of reception" remain conceptually vague and methodologically underdeveloped. Ahmad (2010) and Syamsuddin (2017) have previously argued that measuring religious internalization demands a robust mixed-methods framework

that combines ethnographic observation, in-depth interviews, and longitudinal assessment. Without such methodological rigor, the proposed evaluation model risks producing subjective and non-replicable results. Furthermore, previous research by Mustaqim (2019) on Living Qur'an in *pesantren* contexts demonstrated that the institutionalization of Qur'anic values cannot be reduced to measurable indicators alone, as it is deeply embedded in habitual practices and communal traditions that resist standardized measurement.

The researcher's call to integrate *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* into Living Qur'an studies and da'wah evaluation is theoretically sound. Scholars such as Auda (2008) in *Maqāṣid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law* have convincingly demonstrated the capacity of the *maqāṣid* framework to bridge normative Islamic principles with contemporary social realities. However, the researcher's treatment of this framework appears superficial, as it does not sufficiently engage with the internal debates within *maqāṣid* scholarship itself. For instance, the tension between the classical five objectives (*al-kulliyat al-khams*) as formulated by al-Ghazālī and al-Shāṭibī, and the extended objectives proposed by Ibn 'Āshūr and contemporary scholars like Jasser Auda, is left unaddressed. This omission weakens the analytical depth of the proposed framework. Moreover, previous empirical studies such as Hidayat's (2021) research on da'wah ethics in urban Muslim communities found that *maqāṣid*-based evaluation, while normatively appealing, often encounters resistance at the grassroots level due to gaps between theological ideals and lived community realities.

The fifth agenda proposed by the researcher connecting Living Qur'an studies with media analysis and the political economy of da'wah is arguably the most theoretically ambitious and practically urgent. This agenda aligns with the broader critical turn in religious media studies, particularly the works of Hirschkind (2006) in *The Ethical Soundscape* and Eickelman and Anderson (2003) in *New Media in the Muslim World*, both of which examine how digital technologies reshape religious authority, access, and practice. The researcher rightly identifies the dual character of digital media: democratizing access on one hand, while simultaneously enabling commodification and fragmentation of religious discourse on the other. However, the analysis lacks engagement with the concept of "platformization of religion" as developed by Geltzer (2022) and Bunt (2018), who argue that algorithmic logics do not merely mediate religious content but actively restructure religious epistemologies and hierarchies of authority. The researcher's framework, while promising, does not sufficiently theorize the mechanisms through which platform capitalism shapes Qur'anic reception, nor does it propose concrete methodological tools such as digital ethnography or critical discourse analysis of social media content to investigate these dynamics empirically.

Across all five proposed agendas, a broader theoretical gap is evident: the researcher does not sufficiently situate the Living Qur'an concept within its genealogy in Western reception theory. The foundational works of Hans Robert Jauss on *Rezeptionsästhetik* (reception aesthetics) and Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory, which have been adapted into Islamic studies by scholars like Navid Kermani (2004) and Daniel Madigan (2001), remain unengaged. Incorporating these perspectives would have strengthened the theoretical scaffolding of the entire research agenda. Additionally, comparative perspectives from non-Indonesian Muslim contexts such as Qur'anic reception studies in West Africa (Launay, 2016) or South Asia (Metcalf, 1993) would have enriched the analysis and allowed for cross-cultural generalization of the findings.

CONCLUSION

From the above description, it can be emphasized that the epistemology of the Living Qur'an in da'wah rests on an integrative relationship between revelation, social reality, and the subject of transformation. Revelation serves as the normative horizon; social reality becomes the arena where Qur'anic values are manifested, negotiated, and sometimes distorted; while da'wah functions as a mediator that reads, assesses, and directs these practices. Thus, the Living Qur'an cannot be understood simply as an inventory of religious

traditions related to the Qur'an. It must be read as a means of gaining knowledge about Muslim communities and how they bring revelation to life. In the context of da'wah, this knowledge is crucial because effective da'wah cannot be built solely on text without understanding the context. Conversely, da'wah must not stop at the context without a normative orientation to revelation.

The Living Qur'an's primary contribution to da'wah is providing an epistemological basis for more empirical, dialogical, and transformative da'wah. It helps da'wah understand the Qur'anic cultural capital already present in society, distinguish between substantive and merely symbolic receptions, and then design strategies capable of strengthening the internalization of Qur'anic values in real life. Therefore, the Living Qur'an deserves to be positioned not only as an approach in Qur'anic studies, but also as a paradigm in the development of contemporary da'wah. In the future, this study could be expanded into field research in specific communities, such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), urban Muslim communities, digital study groups, or Qur'anic philanthropy movements. This fieldwork could lead to the development of a more specific, data-driven, and relevant da'wah model for local challenges. Thus, the relationship between the Living Qur'an and da'wah will not be limited to theoretical construction but will truly become the foundation for practical social change rooted in revelation.

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