

Scientific Research Methodologies in Advanced Quranic Studies: Challenges and Ways of Development

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Abstract

In light of the pivotal role of scientific research, world powers vie for extensive research institutions and allocate hefty budgets for them. Universities have responded by creating specialized faculties for scientific and postgraduate studies, all aimed at fostering distinguished research. These efforts seek to enhance human knowledge with innovative scientific and practical advancements and uncover new truths, a practice embraced by progressive nations to meet societal needs that evolve with time and place. Scientific research in advanced Quranic studies is integral to this trend, emerging as a critical project within the "review and development" discourse. It is an urgent necessity, driven by the era's fast-paced changes, and faces challenges that hinder its developmental potential and societal contribution. We aim for further innovation in the methodologies of scientific research in Quranic studies, calling for a coalition of efforts among scholars and researchers. Emphasizing the utilization of field studies and comprehensive research, alongside modern technologies, is paramount in advancing this field.

Keywords: *Research Methodologies, Quranic Studies, Ways of Development.*

Introduction

Praise be to Allah who revealed the Book to His servant without any crookedness, upright to warn of severe punishment from Him, and to give good tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that they will have a good reward. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad bin Abdullah, whom Allah opened his chest, relieved his burden, and raised his mention, and upon his family and companions. Moving forward: It is not hidden from anyone with knowledge and insight that the advancement and prosperity of nations have always been contingent upon the great attention and exceptional care that those in charge of their affairs give to scientific research - the pillar of all planning and the nerve of all development.

Given this significant importance, the race among major countries to possess the greatest number of research institutions, and to allocate the largest budget for their funding, has led most universities to open specialized programs and establish faculties for scientific research and graduate studies. All of which agree on promoting distinguished research work, hoping that these researches will contribute to enriching human knowledge in all its branches through specialized studies, and serious research aimed at reaching innovative scientific and practical additions, uncovering new truths. Therefore, it is not surprising that meticulous review of this is a habit of advanced nations and is practiced by conscious peoples with the aim of improving and activating its effective presence to meet the needs of the society, which change with the changing times and places. As for scientific research in advanced Quranic studies and educational institutions interested in this field, it is not isolated from what has been mentioned. It has also become one of the important projects when talking about "review and development". Indeed, it has become an urgent necessity imposed by the nature of the era and its rapid changes. Like other specialties, it faces many obstacles and problems that hinder its development, which, unfortunately, sometimes makes it unable to contribute adequately to improving the reality, proposing suggestions, and finding appropriate solutions to the various problems and challenges faced by the society, whether they are (intellectual, religious, social, economic, or others.)

From this standpoint, we look forward to more creativity in serving scientific research and its methodologies in advanced Quranic studies. We aim to unify efforts among researchers, experts, and scholars in this field, and we would like to benefit from field studies and in-depth research to develop it,

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alongside leveraging contemporary technologies. In pursuit of disciplined scientific participation in this common concern among universities, I have resolved, after placing my trust in God Almighty, to write on this topic with the purpose of presenting it to the esteemed scholars of the scientific committee at the first international conference on applied research in the humanities and social sciences - global practices, at the prestigious University of Sharjah.

Questions This Research Revolves Around

- What is the reality of scientific research in advanced Quranic studies at our Arab universities?
- What are the most significant challenges and obstacles it faces?
- What are the key proposals and recommendations that could contribute to its improvement or help overcome the difficulties and obstacles it faces?

Objectives

- To ascertain the reality of scientific research in Arab universities.
- To present proposals and recommendations that could contribute to the development of scientific research.

Research Methodology

To achieve these goals, the researcher will use descriptive and analytical methods to produce precise results based on thorough induction and analytical study.

Research Plan

Introduction: This includes defining the research (research problem, research questions, research goal, importance of the topic, research methodology, and plan).

Preliminary: Concept of scientific research in the field of Quranic studies, and its authenticity and importance.

First requirement: The meaning of development, its importance, and its benefits.

Second requirement: The reality of scientific research and its problems in the field of advanced Quranic studies.

Third requirement: Proposals for developing the curricula of advanced Quranic studies.

Hoping that this will meet with God's approval and acceptance.

First Requirement: Scientific Research in Advanced Quranic Studies (Its Concept and Authenticity)

Firstly: The Concept of Scientific Research in Quranic Studies.

To understand the concept of research, it is first necessary to define the meaning of research and the meaning of science.

The word "research" in Arabic comes from the verb 'bahaatha,' meaning to search or inquire about something, and to search deeply (Al-Razi, 1990, p. 41).

Thus, research means the exploration and investigation of a specific issue until its truth is clarified.

The definition of research in technical terms does not deviate from its linguistic meaning. It is a scientific process where facts are gathered, and both tangible and intangible elements related to a specific topic are thoroughly examined using established scientific methodologies to arrive at new scientific results (Abu Sulaiman, 1996, p. 25).

As for science, linguistically it means "perceiving something as it truly is" (Al-Isfahani, 1412H, p. 580), and this perception is only achieved through understanding or prediction and linking causes to their effects.

In technical terms, it is a collection of issues and general principles that revolve around a single subject, treated with a specific methodology, and culminating in some theories and laws, such as the science of law and medicine, among others (Salama, 2007, p. 13).

The definition of scientific research, therefore, ties back to the meanings of both 'research' and 'science.'

Consequently, some have defined it as "the exercise of thought and the exertion of organized mental effort on a set of issues or problems, by investigating and probing the principles or relationships that link them, ultimately reaching the truth upon which the best solutions are based" (Salama, 2007, p. 13).

Arthur Cole defined scientific research as: "A comprehensive report presented by the scientific researcher through work he has undertaken and completed, covering all stages of the study, from its inception as an idea to its conclusion as documented, organized, and supported by evidence and arguments."

Others have described it as: "An organized intellectual process for discovering the reasons for a specific problem presented in the form of hypotheses or questions" (Deibold Van, 1969, p. 9).

And other definitions, which I have abbreviated here, largely agree that scientific research is an organized scientific process through which all evidence and testimonies are examined to discover a truth from truths.

This concerns scientific research in general, and since we are discussing Quranic studies in this research, we can say that scientific research in Quranic studies involves adhering to a systematic methodology to study an issue or a problem related to the Holy Quran and its sciences. This involves rigorously investigating all evidence, proofs, and testimonies about the subject, studying them accurately with the help of correct scientific methods, and tools of understanding and legal controls, aiming to reach a truth of truths. (Al-Kubaisi, 2015, pp. 349-408)

"This means that Quranic scientific research aligns with the requirements of the changing reality in a way that secures and enhances the mission of this research and maximizes its capacity to confront deviant thought as well as to face and predict societal changes before they occur, providing appropriate training facilities required by reality, in order to foster a spirit of brotherhood, love, and harmony, and to develop awareness among all individuals, especially students, and to invigorate the institutions in which they study, emphasizing the importance of human existence and happiness, and showing respect to them as this is central to preserving their dignity and protecting their rights and achievements." (Al-Kubaisi, 2015, pp. 349-408)

Secondly: The Primacy of the Holy Quran and Its Call to Scientific Research

If we want to speak about the merits of the Holy Quran and its contributions to establishing the principles of scientific research, it can be said:

Scientific research is historically linked to the human endeavor for knowledge and understanding of the universe they live in. Since the creation of Adam, and his descent to Earth, humans have engaged their minds and thoughts, searching for the best ways to live on the surface of the Earth. Allah Almighty said: (And He taught Adam all the names, then He showed them to the angels and said, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful.") (Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 31).

When Islam came, verses of the Quran were revealed that elevate the status of knowledge and scholars, and call for glorifying the intellect and acquiring knowledge through research, reflection, and thinking. Its verses in many places urge reflection and contemplation of the creation of the heavens and the earth. This approach in the Book of Allah has opened human eyes and drawn their attention. For example, the Quran says: (The sun runs [on course] toward its stopping point. That is the determination of the Almighty, the Knowing * And the moon, We have determined for it phases until it returns [appearing] like the old date stalk. It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day. They each swim in an orbit.) (Surah Ya-Sin 38) The Quran also talks about the creation of man and his stages, saying: (And indeed, We created man from an extract of clay * Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging * Then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump [of flesh], and We made the lump bones, and We covered the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is Allah, the best of creators.) (Surah Al-Mu'minoon 14) These stages mentioned by Allah in the Quran were unknown before its revelation, and this alert directly contributed to scientists, doctors, and specialists building their scientific research on these Quranic cues about the creation of man and his stages. In many places in the Book of Allah, questions are posed that are filled with encouragement for thinking and scientific research, such as His saying (Have you seen what you plow - Is it you who causes it to grow, or are We the grower?), and then the Lord Blessed and Exalted says: (Have you seen the water that you drink? Is it you who brought it down from the clouds, or are We the bringer?), and then the Lord says: (Have you seen the fire that you ignite - Is it you who produced its tree, or are We the producer?) (Surah Al-Waqi'ah 68).

All these verses and others clearly indicate the contribution of the Holy Quran in laying the foundations for research, investigation, and exploration, and this matter is not limited to Muslims only, but the whole world has benefited from these terms, and this precise scientific style, which confirms the roots and authenticity of scientific research in the Book of Allah.

Thirdly: The Importance of Scientific Research in Quranic Studies

From the definition previously presented for scientific research, it is evident that it is closely linked to exploring everything that can add something new, solve a problem, or clarify an issue in a specific scientific topic.

Therefore, the significance and value of research in Quranic studies lie in how beneficial the results and recommendations derived from this research are in developing or proposing solutions for the contemporary problems and challenges that people face in their reality. Hence, scientific research is not an end in itself, but rather a means to achieve that goal, which fundamentally represents the flourishing of societies, their development, and the solving of their problems. (Al-Jayousi, 2008, pp. 1-13) The relationship of scientific research in Quranic studies with other sectors is integrative, aimed collectively at improving the quality of life and the well-being of communities, developing their reality, and providing the suitable environment for them. This outcome cannot be achieved unless such researches offer a set of qualitative projects, which will only be possible after engaging with the surrounding community—across its various institutions (religious, social, economic, educational, etc.)—identifying its problems, then studying them and finally working diligently to find solutions and overcome them using available material and human resources. "Indeed, most aspects of life that people experience are fruits of accumulated scientific research; what people eat, wear, ride, communicate with, write with, and more are results of serious scientific research, provided there are devoted scholars. Moreover, fruitful knowledge suits only the specially qualified creative researcher, who does not deviate from the path of science to the right or left... Serious researchers in every field are those who work at the core of science, ... the point that builds tomorrow and constructs the future."

Additionally, a researcher in the Holy Quran has a uniqueness above all, as they delve into and explore the vast fields of the Quran, deriving guidance, understanding rulings, clarifying meanings, and making its sciences accessible to all Muslims who worship Allah through the Quran and learn its sciences. Observers of the field of Quranic studies in the modern age see a commendable movement in the development of scientific research, as evidenced by the publication of exegesis books, with most of their important editions being published. (Al-Shahri, 1433H, p. 10)

Second Requirement: The Reality and Challenges of Scientific Research in Advanced Quranic Studies

Given the great importance of scientific research, most universities have initiated academic specializations and established faculties for scientific research and postgraduate studies, all agreeing on encouraging outstanding research work, hoping that these researches would enrich human knowledge in all its branches through specialized studies and serious research aimed at achieving innovative scientific and practical additions and uncovering new truths.

Despite scientific research being considered one of the most important pillars of universities and being highly prioritized by countries through the establishment of various research centers and linking faculty promotions at universities to scientific research as a major condition for promotion, those involved in scientific research at universities collectively agree that the quantity and nature of scientific research do not meet the expectations of the beneficiaries and reveal a gap between the research conducted in universities and the needs and requirements of development.

Several factors have contributed to the decline in the level of scientific research in these universities:

- *Lack of awareness* of the importance of scientific research, its purposes, and methodologies.
- *Absence of Clear Strategies* for scientific research and considering its programs secondary.
- *Weak Funding*, with almost no contribution from the productive sector and the private sector.
- *Poor Cooperation and Coordination* between labor market institutions and research centers.
- *Lack of Attention to Establishing* comprehensive and sufficient knowledge databases that enhance the scope of scientific research.
- *Individualism In Choosing Research Topics*: Some researchers, when an idea for their research occurs to them, do not discuss it with their colleagues or even their professors.
- *Neglecting the Priorities of Scientific Research*, which in our legal tradition is based on the principle of benefits and harms, a respected rule aimed at preventing harm and bringing good, or preventing damage and bringing benefit, as expressed by the Holy Quran in terms of bad and good.
- *Ambiguity in The University's Mission*, the major problem being the nature of the university's goals and its scientific mission, which are often merely tools for perpetuating functions and lastly consider scientific research, losing one of the most important conditions for its success— independence from any external influences that are not part of its scientific mission and no longer its agenda for graduating researchers who keep up with the latest in their field and innovate, but rather graduating those who fill gaps in various other societal institutions with a minimum of traditional knowledge that has not been reviewed for decades.
- *Focus On Quantity*, hence part of the crisis in scientific research in this field for our religious colleges in our universities today, is reflected in postgraduate students' information being limited to what is found in old books only, rigidity of thought in the jurisprudence of worship and family law with a focus on the jurisprudence of the school when weighing and favoring it even if it is inferior, loss of scientific methodology and modern treatment in some Islamic research studies, in addition to the predominance of the quantitative aspect, with some supervising professors and their students fearing to engage with knowledge technology. (Al-Harbi, 2010, p. 12)

In a general discussion not limited to one field over another but since we are discussing scientific research in advanced Quranic studies here, it is unfortunate that the situation is not much different from other

specialties. At a time when such research and university theses should be distinguished from other fields, a thoughtful examination of the indexes and titles in libraries and research centers and faculties of postgraduate studies where many theses have been registered or discussed reveals a number of observations, which can be highlighted in this requirement.

- *The Failure to Keep Up with the Changes And Challenges f The Times*

One of the most notable observations in this regard is that most of these scientific studies have not been linked to the needs of local communities and development requirements. In other words, they did not take priorities into account when selecting research topics. Therefore, graduate colleges must work diligently to identify these needs and quickly align research with them. The rapid and varied changes occurring in our world today demand that these institutions keep pace with the nature and speed of change. For state institutions to maintain their relevance, they must assume new roles while continuing to fulfill their original functions, which presents a significant challenge for them (Al-Dawlat, 2011, p. 119).

- *Repetition Of Research Topics and Registered University Theses in Graduate Colleges*

One of the most frequent issues noted is the repetition and similarity of research titles, often due to the lack of a clear vision and the absence of bibliographic control over registered theses. This has led some researchers to delve into similar and repetitive studies (Al-Jayousi, 2008, pp. 1-13).

- *The Absence of a Critical Approach in Most Research and Scientific Theses*

The purpose of scientific research is not merely to collect and document information but to analyze and critique it. Unfortunately, this aspect is often missing in most research, particularly in advanced Qur'anic studies, where the focus tends to be on gathering material without analysis or critique. As a result, these studies produce conclusions that are, at best, superficial.

- *Rigidity, Bias, and Fanaticism*

While the Qur'an encourages dialogue and moderation, even in matters of belief, to achieve the best solutions and make differences a tool for mutual understanding among nations and tribes, some researchers, due to their rigidity and bias, entrap themselves in narrow thinking. This leads them, during their research, to force meanings onto texts that cannot bear them, distorting their interpretation to align with their preconceived beliefs. This deprives them of one of the most important qualities of a good researcher—objectivity (Ubaydat, 1987, pp. 36-38).

This summary indicates that the shortcomings in scientific research within advanced Qur'anic studies are not due to the absence of research but rather to the failure to connect the research outputs with the needs of society. The research often does not align with real-world needs or provide relevant contributions in this field.

Before discussing appropriate solutions and recommendations to address this situation, it is important to note that many field studies have examined the reality of scientific research and its shortcomings compared to other educational institutions. These studies identified several key issues:

First: The Ambiguity of The University's Mission.

The primary goals of universities—often focused on producing graduates to fill gaps in various societal institutions and provide the labor market with the minimum required knowledge—undermine the conditions necessary for success.

Second: The Individualistic Approach to Selecting Research Topics

Some researchers fear that discussing their ideas with colleagues or professors will result in their topics being stolen. However, this concern is unfounded, as the uniqueness of a researcher's perspective makes it impossible to replicate their work (Al-Kubaisi, 2015, vol. 1, pp. 349-408).

Third: Neglecting Research Priorities in Qur'anic Studies

“All religion is based on a system of priorities. A clear example of this principle is found in the well-known Hadith of Gabriel, where the Prophet Muhammad mentioned Islam first, then faith, followed by excellence (Ihsan). Within Islam, he mentioned the five pillars, beginning with the testimony of faith, followed by prayer, charity (zakat), fasting, and pilgrimage. The same principle was applied to the concepts of faith and excellence... This demonstrates the importance of prioritization, which is essential for rational methodology.

A person who disciplines themselves to follow a system of priorities—balancing what is fixed and what is flexible—adopts a sound and methodical approach”

Fourth: The absence of clear strategies for scientific research in most universities and, at times, the lack of a research plan through which research can be directed and integrated, or at least reviewed and verified by specialists in the field of Qur'anic studies.

Fifth: The lack of coordination and cooperation between institutions, colleges, and universities concerned with teaching Qur'anic studies.

Sixth: The absence of systems that allow access to some scientific research and university theses, as they are still kept in closed archives in many universities, and in some cases, access is restricted by complex regulations and conditions.

Seventh: The lack of interest in establishing sufficient and comprehensive knowledge databases that contribute to expanding the horizons of scientific research.

Eighth: Weak funding, with an almost complete absence of contributions from the productive sector and private sector, and weak cooperation and coordination between labor market institutions and research centers.

There are also other reasons, in addition to a series of factors that can be referred to as reasons for developing research methodologies in Qur'anic studies. Two of the most important are mentioned here: First: The evolving demands of life. It is noticeable that with the advent of each era, the needs and demands of life increase and diversify in all areas—social, economic, political, educational, and others. This increase and diversification result in numerous problems and complexities, for which people always seek solutions, finding refuge only in religion. This highlights the importance of renewing religious education methodologies so that the younger generation can find in them solutions to their problems and achieve their aspirations and needs.

Second: The explosion of knowledge. Today, the world is witnessing rapid scientific and technological advancement across all areas of life, resulting in an enormous amount of knowledge. It has become difficult for curricula in general to encompass it, and for learners to acquire and master it. Therefore, it has become essential to establish clear standards to determine the type and amount of knowledge, how it should be presented, the tools that can aid the educational process, and the methods for assessing it.

In conclusion, the problem, in brief, is not the absence of scientific research in Qur'anic studies but rather the absence of most of this research from the reality experienced by these societies or the failure to effectively and positively utilize the mission of these Qur'anic research colleges to address societal needs. This detachment of research from the field and isolation from the surrounding institutions necessitates

searching for a set of proposed solutions to improve and enhance this reality, which will be the topic of the final section, God willing.

The third requirement: Proposals for development and success in advanced Qur'anic studies.

The following are a set of proposals hoped to enhance, develop, and elevate the level of scientific research in universities, listed briefly without elaboration:

Establishing A Clear Plan to Develop Scientific Research in Qur'anic Studies

For scientific research that keeps pace with the times, aligns with the reality of life, and serves society, there must be a clear and precise roadmap for universities and their Qur'anic studies departments to follow. This ensures that research continues to fulfill its mission, promotes the moderate approach, and responds to society's developmental needs in its broad sense. This planning and development require essential elements, including:

The development and planning must have a clear goal aligned with life circumstances and people's needs. Clear goals simplify the development process, facilitate planning and implementation, and promote acceptance among the target group, whereas unclear goals lead to randomness, improvisation, and potentially negative results.

Planning must follow well-studied scientific and educational foundations, with clear, sequential, and phased steps.

Development should be entrusted to a group of specialists, researchers, and scholars in Qur'anic, legal, social, and scientific studies.

Establishing A Development and Quality Unit in Every Educational Institution

This unit should consist of academics with relevant expertise and competence within the institution, with the option of seeking external expertise. The unit would monitor and ensure the proper implementation of educational processes, programs, support services, and administrative and financial aspects to guarantee education quality. It should also promote a culture of quality within the institution, identify problems, propose solutions, and follow up on continuous improvement processes, including conducting annual self-assessments (Al-Hawali, 2004, pp. 1-3).

Coordinating Between Academic Departments at The National Level and Then Across Countries

Such coordination helps avoid many issues and challenges.

The necessity of reviewing the efforts of global universities and research centers and establishing connections with specialists worldwide. Benefiting from their experience can help renew Qur'anic studies in our universities, especially since this field has become integrated into major strategic research centers in both Arab and Western universities, focusing on their relationship with the Islamic world on knowledge, cultural, economic, legal, and other levels (Al-Zahiri, 2015, p. 12).

The need to reconsider university research topics and theses by guiding students to present new ideas aligned with development plans, societal needs, and changing realities. This approach reinforces the message of Islam and research by demonstrating its ability to address and anticipate societal changes.

Organizing specialized conferences and seminars to strengthen the relationship between university theses and development plans, raising awareness among supervisors, researchers, and those interested. Graduate studies deanships should play a proactive role in directing research and theses to serve society.

Facilitating the participation of researchers and scholars in conferences, seminars, and research workshops focused on research and development. These events reveal future research directions in various fields, offering researchers insights, ideas, and valuable information and providing problem-solving strategies.

Providing an electronic resource base with distinguished knowledge content to assist researchers in various fields. Ensuring the availability of information for research purposes requires the attention and support of relevant authorities, allowing researchers to access essential information and data for their studies. This involves careful preparation and presentation of data and information in modern formats compatible with scientific work requirements and using appropriate computing tools and statistical methods.

Enacting regulations requiring industrial institutions and companies to allocate a portion of their annual net profits to fund scientific research, as practiced in many countries. This allows these entities to benefit from universities' expertise and activities to enhance their production programs.

Finally, for the success of the above initiatives, all research and university theses must embody a national character, free from all forms of fanaticism, embracing the principles of moderation, tolerance, compassion, coexistence, and mutual understanding. This is the true essence of Islam.

And God Almighty knows best. Peace and blessings be upon you.

Conclusion

Praise be to Allah, the First and the Last, with praise befitting the greatness of His majesty, His grace, and beauty, matching His blessings and meeting His generosity. Praise be to Allah, who granted me the honor of engaging in what serves the Holy Qur'an and its people and enabled me to complete this research. At its conclusion, I record the most important findings and recommendations as follows:

This study clearly emphasized the need for our universities to develop a project for advancing scientific research in Qur'anic studies.

A key aspect of the current crisis in scientific research within Qur'anic studies lies in the lack of scientific methodology and contemporary approaches to many issues. Researchers must free their minds from preconceived notions and allow themselves complete freedom to explore and discover, ensuring their responses remain impartial in discussions, even if they contradict their previous beliefs.

Scholars and academic professors in Qur'anic studies must review the efforts of universities and global research centers, establish connections with specialists worldwide, and benefit from them to shape the renewal of Qur'anic studies in our universities.

This study clearly highlighted the importance of researchers in Qur'anic studies adhering to the principle of prioritization when selecting their research topics. They should also strive to produce serious research aimed at presenting religion in a renewed form that reflects the objectives and purposes of the Qur'an.

If we truly want advanced universities and colleges in Qur'anic studies with sound scientific research meeting all the requirements of modern research methods, we must change, open ourselves to the world, and strengthen our connection with the present and its components.

Strategic planning, focusing on future scenarios and preparing to address anticipated problems with solutions, is essential.

Supporting the progress of scientific research in Qur'anic studies is necessary by encouraging faculty members and student researchers to author works and supporting the publication of their studies and research in this field in Arab and international scientific journals, in addition to the research published in university journals.

The continuous review and development of research methodologies in Qur'anic studies must be a consistent and ongoing approach, as halting continuous development means ceasing to contribute to progress, revival, and advancement for nations.

And Allah is the Guide to the straight path.

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