

## Constructing Postcolonial Muslim Identity: A Dual-Theory Framework of Qur'anic Learning in Indonesia

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### Abstract

This research examines the construction of religious identity through decolonization in Qur'anic learning in postcolonial Indonesia by integrating Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction Theory and Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory within a decolonial framework. Through a systematic literature review of 53 peer-reviewed academic publications (2014-2025) selected through purposive sampling based on relevance to Qur'an pedagogy, identity formation, and decolonial discourse in Indonesia, this study employs thematic analysis within an interpretive, qualitative, and postcolonial approach. Identity formation operates through three mechanisms: externalization of religious values, objectivization in Islamic institutions, and transformative internalization. Decolonization strategies emerge through epistemological reintegration and pedagogical contextualization that bridge Qur'an teachings with the contemporary reality of Indonesia. The multidimensional model conceptualizes identity formation as a process unfolding across three dialectical axes: temporal (deconstruction, reconstruction, co-construction), social (individual, communal, national), and cultural (universality, locality, globality). The synthesized literature findings challenge Western-centered theoretical assumptions: Indonesian Muslims demonstrate multi-layered and intersecting categorizations, culturally meaningful identifications, and reflective comparisons that are contributory rather than competitive. This study advances decolonial Islamic thought by positioning Qur'an learning as an emancipatory epistemological praxis that transcends the anti-Western or pro-Western dichotomy. The Indonesian model shows how decolonization manifests in daily pedagogical practices rather than in abstract discourse, offering a replicable framework for global Muslim communities that negotiate authentic identity within postcolonial modernity without reproducing Western hegemony or reactive fundamentalism.

**Keywords:** Religious Identity Construction, Qur'anic Learning Practices, Postcolonial Decolonization, Social Identity Theory, Indonesian Muslims

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## Introduction

Social identity theory predicts that threatened groups develop binary in-group/out-group categorizations and engage in competitive intergroup comparison.<sup>1</sup> However, Indonesian Muslims confronting postcolonial identity pressures exhibit patterns contradicting these predictions.<sup>2</sup> They maintain simultaneous Muslim-Indonesian identities without cognitive dissonance,<sup>3</sup> pursue contributive rather than competitive social comparison, and develop substantive cultural identification beyond minimal group membership. This conceptual mismatch reveals a critical gap: Western-derived identity theories may be culturally bounded, yet postcolonial Muslim identity formation remains under-theorized.<sup>4</sup>

This theoretical disjuncture is most visible within Indonesia's Qur'anic learning institutions. Serving 87% of the Muslim population<sup>5</sup> through *pesantren*, *madrasah*, and community circles, these institutions provide a strategic site to examine this puzzle. Historically, colonial Dutch education institutionalized religious-secular dichotomies that persist in contemporary curricula,<sup>6</sup> creating the very structural conditions that necessitate complex identity negotiation. The daily pedagogical practices in these institutions thus offer a counter-narrative to Western models of social identity, revealing how integrated identities are forged in the face of long-standing structural bifurcations.

Previous research on Qur'an learning in Indonesia experiences three fundamental weaknesses that create a research gap. First, the normative pedagogical approach neglects the socio-political postcolonial dimension. Hanafi's study of the integration of Islamic knowledge with modernity does not interrogate the genealogy of power behind the category of modernity.<sup>7</sup> Khoirunisa, in her research, explains that Qur'an learning is often limited only to improving students' morality.<sup>8</sup> Second, postcolonial analyses are disconnected from grassroots learning practices. Mushthafa's research on the decolonization of Islamic studies remains in the discursive-theoretical realm, without investigating how the process of decolonization (or its failure) manifests in daily pedagogical interactions in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), *TPQ* (Qur'an Learning Centers), or *majelis taklim* (Islamic study circles).<sup>9</sup> According to Samier, the globalization of Islamic

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<sup>1</sup> Saul McLeod, "Social Identity Theory In Psychology (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)," Simply Psychology, 2023, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Ridho Riyanto and Sofan Sulong, "Potret Pemikiran Negotiating Religious Identity in Health Practices : Muslim Community Resistance to the Hegemonization of Secular Dietary Patterns In," *Potret Pemikiran* 29, no. 1 (2025): 52–74.

<sup>3</sup> Sarah Demmrich and Abdulkerim Şenel, "Entitativity as a Moderator? A Brief Report Unraveling the Relations between Deprivation, Fundamentalism, and Radicalization," *Current Psychology* 44, no. 8 (2025): 6838–47, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-025-07674-6>.

<sup>4</sup> Lourdes Habash, "Decentring Western IR Theories: Unveiling Efforts from the Arab World Lourdes Habash," *All Azimuth*, 2025, 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.20991/allazimuth.1700780>.

<sup>5</sup> Salmah Muslimah, "Islam Agama Mayoritas Di Indonesia, Dianut 245 Juta Jiwa," kumparanNEWS, 2024, <https://kumparan.com/kumparannews/data-dukcapil-2024-islam-agama-majoritas-di-indonesia-dianut-245-juta-jiwa-23Hnnzxwyq8>.

<sup>6</sup> Daphne Nederhoed, "Religion in the Classroom Diverse Classroom" (2023).

<sup>7</sup> Wahyu Hanafi, "Pergeseran Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam (Menelusuri Jejak Historis Pendidikan Islam Klasik Hingga Kontemporer)," *Al-Adabiya: Jurnal Kebudayaan Dan Keagamaan* 9, no. 1 (2014): 1–20.

<sup>8</sup> Khoirunisa, "Akhlik Siswa Terhadap Guru Pada Pendekatan Normatif Di Dalam Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan (JISIP)* 6, no. 1 (2022): 2015–2025.

<sup>9</sup> M. Mushtafa, "Decolonizing Javanese-Islamic Identity in the Discourses of Contemporary Indonesian Islamic Studies," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Jurnal Ilmiah Sosiologi Agama Dan Perubahan Sosial* 15, no. 1 (2021): 55–70, <http://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/ushuluddin/SosiologiAgama/article/view/2650>.

education is seen as a form of recolonization in which foreign curricula and practices (especially those from the West) threaten the integrity of local cultures, particularly in developing countries.<sup>10</sup>

Third, the absence of a theoretical framework that integrates the dimension of social construction (Berger) with the formation of collective identity (Tajfel Turner) in a postcolonial context. Rahman uses postcolonial theory to critique the Western-centric model of education, but does not operationalize it to examine the micro-processes of religious identity formation through learning practices.<sup>11</sup> In other words, there is no systematic research on how colonial legacies operate within the epistemological, curricular, and pedagogical structures of Qur'an learning. This is important to understand because it can shape or even distort the religious identity of contemporary Indonesian Muslims.

Responding to this theoretical void, this study focuses on one main contribution: developing an integrative theoretical model that explains how colonial epistemological dichotomies are internalized and transformed through the practice of learning the Qur'an in Indonesia. Unlike normative-pedagogical studies that ignore the dimension of power, or postcolonial analyses that are disconnected from everyday practices, this study bridges social construction theory (Berger-Luckmann) with social identity theory (Tajfel-Turner) within a postcolonial analytical framework. This focus was chosen because Qur'anic learning is the most massive epistemological arena in Indonesia—Involving millions of Muslims every day—yet the mechanisms of identity construction within it have not been systematically mapped with an adequate theoretical framework.

This study makes one primary contribution: it challenges the universality of Western social identity theory by demonstrating how Indonesian Muslims construct religious identity through mechanisms that deviate from classical theoretical predictions. Specifically, while Tajfel-Turner's theory predicts binary categorization and competitive intergroup comparison, Indonesian Qur'anic learning produces: (1) nested and permeable categorization (simultaneous Muslim-Indonesian-citizen identities), (2) substantive cultural identification (not merely minimal group membership), and (3) contributive rather than competitive social comparison. To explain these deviations, we develop an integrative framework combining Berger-Luckmann's Social Construction Theory with Tajfel-Turner's Social Identity Theory, supplemented by postcolonial analysis. This framework reveals that colonial epistemological dichotomies—institutionalized through curricula and pedagogical practices—create structural conditions that enable Indonesian Muslims to develop hybrid identities resistant to both Western hegemony and reactive fundamentalism.

How pedagogical methods reflect or reject the colonial educational model, and how the learning community constructs an Indonesian Muslim identity that is different from the identity of Muslims in the Middle East or Muslim minorities in the West. Third, the epistemological contribution to the discourse of contemporary Islamic thought by offering an alternative epistemological model that reinterprets Qur'an learning within a decolonial framework. Different from traditional approaches that treat the Qur'an as a theological normative object of study, this study positions Qur'an learning as epistemological praxis. A space in which Indonesian Muslims not only receive revelation, but actively construct the meaning of revelation through critical dialogue with colonial history, local traditions, and the challenges of modernity.

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<sup>10</sup> Eugenie Samier, "Toward a Postcolonial Securities Critique of Higher Education Leadership: Globalization as a Recolonization in Developing Countries like the UAE," *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 23 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1591514>.

<sup>11</sup> Najib Aulia Rahman and Aisha , Azzahra, "The Role of Islamic Education in Preserving Cultural Identity Amidst Global Modernity," *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 4 (2024): 257–271.

This epistemological model addresses fundamental questions in postcolonial Islamic thought by exploring how Muslims can develop an epistemology that neither rejects nor imitates the West. Instead, it seeks to construct an alternative episteme rooted in the Islamic scholarly tradition while maintaining a critical stance toward various forms of hegemony. Qur'an learning in Indonesia, with its unique integration of universal Islamic values and local Nusantara wisdom, becomes an epistemological laboratory to address these questions. This conceptual synthesis enriches the discussion on the decolonization of Islamic epistemology by providing a literary basis that decolonization does not occur in the abstract philosophical realm, but rather through daily pedagogical practices involving millions of Indonesian Muslims.

This study offers three theoretical innovations. First, methodological integration: we combine Berger-Luckmann's macro-structural analysis with Tajfel-Turner's socio-psychological framework within postcolonial theory. This addresses a persistent gap in Muslim identity studies, which typically employ either sociological or psychological approaches in isolation, missing their dialectical interplay. Second, empirical-conceptual novelty: through a systematic literature review of 53 publications (2014-2025), this study systematically maps how colonial legacies operate in the practice of Al-Qur'an learning in Indonesia—a dimension that has been neglected in postcolonial Islamic studies, which tend to focus on high-level intellectual discourse. Third, substantive theoretical novelty: this study identifies patterns of Indonesian Muslim identity construction that deviate from Western theoretical predictions, namely nested and permeable (rather than binary) categorization, substantive-cultural (rather than minimal) identification, and contributory (rather than competitive) social comparison. This study not only corrects universalistic assumptions in classical social identity theory, but also offers an alternative model that can be replicated in other postcolonial contexts.

## Method

This study is a systematic literature review with an interpretive-postcolonial approach that aims to synthesize conceptual and empirical studies from published literature to construct a theoretical model. The primary data for this study are 53 peer-reviewed academic publications (2014-2025) discussing Al-Qur'an learning, identity formation, and postcolonial discourse in Indonesia. The analysis was conducted not on the learning practices themselves, but on the representation and interpretation of these practices in academic literature.

The integration of Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction Theory with Tajfel Turner's Social Identity Theory was chosen because of their epistemological complementarity. Berger and Luckmann's theory provided a macro-sociological framework for understanding the construction of social reality through the processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, while Tajfel and Turner's theory provided a socio-psychological framework for understanding the mechanisms of group identity formation through categorization, identification, and social comparison. Data analysis employed three-stage thematic coding: descriptive, analytical, and interpretive coding, supported by Mendeley and NVivo. Validity was maintained through source triangulation, audit trail, peer debriefing, and reflexivity.

## Result and Discussion

### ***Mechanisms of Identity Formation (Social Construction Theory vs Social Identity Theory)***

This study integrated Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction Theory (externalization, objectivation, internalization) and Tajfel Turner's Social Identity Theory (categorization,

identification, social comparison) to understand the construction of religious identity through postcolonial Qur'an learning.

### **Berger and Luckmann's Framework: The Dialectical Process of Religious Identity Construction**

Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction Theory positions identity formation as a dialectical process involving three fundamental moments: externalization, objectivation, and internalization.<sup>12</sup> These three moments do not occur linearly, but operate in a continuous cycle. The first moment in Berger and Luckmann's framework is externalization, the process by which individuals and communities express their internal values in concrete social practices. Scholarly analysis reveals that externalization functions as a response to colonial-era secularization pressures. Yongbao documents how Western legal systems marginalized Islamic law, creating conditions in which Indonesian Muslims externalized religious values through Qur'anic learning as an act of epistemic resistance.<sup>13</sup>

This externalization process does not occur in a vacuum, but within a context in which Indonesian Muslims must assert their religious identity as an integral part of national development while also rejecting secular narratives that tend to privatize religion. Pertiwi's findings on the strategy of integrating national and religious identity in Central Java confirmed that the externalization of religious values through Qur'an learning not only affirms Muslim identity abstractly.<sup>14</sup> Specifically, it constructs an "Indonesian Muslim" identity that is different from Muslims in the Middle East or Muslim minorities in the West. The externalization of a hybrid critical identity does not totally reject modernity like fundamentalism, nor does it fully accept secularism like liberalism, but negotiates a third path that is authentic and autonomous.<sup>15</sup>

Externalization manifests through contextual learning methodologies integrating local wisdom and transformative education approaches that reject colonial dichotomies between moral and intellectual knowledge. This positions the Qur'an as a living source for addressing contemporary Indonesian challenges, reflecting proactive construction of alternative epistemes.<sup>16</sup> According to Sulisworo,<sup>17</sup> the transformative education approach emphasizes the internalization of spiritual, ethical values rather than merely the mastery of learning content. This approach externalizes spiritual ethical values, explicitly rejecting the colonial educational model that separates moral knowledge from intellectual knowledge.

The second moment is objectivation, which refers to the process by which practices externalized are institutionalized into social structures, thereby becoming an objective reality accessible and transmittable across generations. In the context of Qur'an learning, objectivation occurs through the institutionalization of practices within various educational institutions such as

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<sup>12</sup> T. Berger, P., Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, ed. Penguin Group (England: Penguin Group, 1966).

<sup>13</sup> Wang Yongbao, "The Impact of Colonialism And Nationalism on The Marginalization Of Islamic Law In The Muslim World," *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law* 12, no. 2 (2024): 375–87.

<sup>14</sup> Ika Hana Pertiwi and Faturochman Faturochman, "Integration of Social Identities in Interreligious-Group Relations," *Jurnal Psikologi* 50, no. 3 (2023): 219, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jpsi.86182>.

<sup>15</sup> Pradana Boy Ztf, "From the Centre to Periphery : The Middle Eastern Impacts on Islamic Education in Indonesia," *Journal of Social Studies (JSS)* 16, no. 1 (2020): 65–82, <https://doi.org/10.21831/jss.v16i1.34702>.

<sup>16</sup> Agus Purwowidodo, "Experiential Learning Model Based on Local Wisdom in Learning Islamic Cultural History," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 8, no. 3 (2024): 862–77, <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i3.492>.

<sup>17</sup> Megawati Dwi Sulisworo, "Transformative Education in Character Development of Students in Religious-Based Schools : Narrative Review," *Edu Cendikia: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan* 4, no. 3 (2024): 1475–1488, <https://doi.org/10.47709/educendikia.v4i03>.

*pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), *madrasah* (Islamic formal schools), *TPQ* (Qur'an Learning Centers), *majelis taklim* (Islamic study circles), and others. Although these institutions differ in their characteristics and orientations, they serve as spaces for the construction of collective identity. Cadge and Konieczny noted that involvement in religious organizations or spiritual communities offered individuals opportunities to explore and express their religious identity.<sup>18</sup> Ramadona's<sup>19</sup> study of community-based tahsin learning demonstrates how collaborative practices—collective recitation, group tafsir discussions—generate social solidarity and shared ownership. This finding illustrates the objectivation process theorized by Berger-Luckmann: informal communal structures create alternative spaces for identity formation outside formal colonial-influenced institutions. This finding confirmed Berger and Luckmann's hypothesis that objectivation creates social structures that appear external and objective to individuals, such as curriculum, learning schedules, and communal rituals. However, these structures are social constructions continuously reproduced through collective practice. The objectivation process contains ambivalence, as it can become an instrument of decolonization or instead reproduce coloniality. As explained by Istikomah, the integration of institutions and curriculum to eliminate the dichotomy of religious and general knowledge serves as an example of decolonial objectivation.<sup>20</sup> Kato emphasized the importance of decolonial science education to build a sustainable and just world, rather than merely serving the neoliberal labor market.<sup>21</sup>

Literature synthesis reveals a critical bifurcation in internalization outcomes. Transformative internalization occurs when Qur'anic learning connects texts to lived realities through dialogical pedagogy, enabling students to embody values in daily practice.<sup>22</sup> Conversely, formalistic internalization—emphasizing memorization without critical reflection—produces compartmentalized identity, where religious knowledge remains disconnected from social action. This bifurcation challenges colonial narratives positioning memorization as "primitive." Studies by Bakah<sup>23</sup> and Gaya & Ahmad<sup>24</sup> demonstrate that Qur'anic memorization, when combined with reflective interpretation, functions as sophisticated epistemic embodiment. For postcolonial Muslim youth, memorization becomes a framework for navigating contemporary challenges—popular culture pressures, Islamophobia—rooted in colonial discourse. Critical factors determining internalization quality include: (1) pedagogical dialogism versus authoritarianism, (2) content relevance to students' socio-cultural context, and (3) communal support reinforcing value

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<sup>18</sup> Wendy Cadge and Mary Ellen Konieczny, "Hidden in Plain Sight? The Significance of Religion and Spirituality in Secular Organizations," *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review* 75, no. 4 (2014): 551–63, <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/sru043>.

<sup>19</sup> Syahri Ramadona, "Implementing Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach in Enhancing Qur'anic Literacy Through Tahsin Learning at Gampong Meunasah, Bireuen, Aceh," *Al-Arkhabiil; Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, no. 2 (2025): 113–131.

<sup>20</sup> Istikomah, "Integrasi Ilmu Sebuah Konsep Pendidikan Islam Ideal," *Tribakti; Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 28, no. 2 (2017): 408–33.

<sup>21</sup> Danilo Seithi et al., "Decolonial Scientific Education to Combat 'Science for Domination,'" *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 18, no. 1 (2023): 217–35, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-023-10165-4>.

<sup>22</sup> Hemlata Verma, "Ethics and Value Education," in *Integrating Indian Knowledge System with Modern Education: Explore Frameworks for Incorporating IKS into Contemporary Curricula*, 2024, 20–24.

<sup>23</sup> Waffa Ruhul Bakah, "Etika Murid Kepada Guru Dalam Surah Al-Kahfi Ayat 65 -70 Dan Implementasinya Pada Pendidikan Modern," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Raushan Fikr* 9, no. 1 (2020): 93–108, <https://doi.org/10.24090/jimrf.v9i1.4136>.

<sup>24</sup> Shahbaz Gaya and Nadzrah Ahmad, "The Concept of Islamic Identity and Its Importance for Muslim Youth," *Al-Daulah; Jurnal Hukum Pidana Dan Ketatanegaraan* 3, no. 2 (2024): 34–49, <https://doi.org/10.24252/al-daulah>.

commitment. These factors indicate that postcolonial internalization is not mechanistic but mediated by learner agency and community dynamics.

### ***Tajfel Turner's Framework: Categorization, Identification, and Social Comparison***

Tajfel-Turner's Social Identity Theory complements Berger-Luckmann by emphasizing cognitive-motivational processes: social categorization, identification, and comparison.<sup>25</sup> In postcolonial Indonesia, these processes operate differently than classical Western predictions, shaping unique Indonesian Muslim identity.<sup>26</sup> The first process in Tajfel Turner's framework is social categorization, namely the cognitive tendency of humans to organize the social world into discrete categories that separate "us" (in-group) from "them" (out-group).<sup>27</sup> In the context of post-colonial Qur'anic learning, various literature deconstructs social categorizations that have been trapped in a simplistic binary opposition between Muslim versus non-Muslim or East versus West. Instead, a redefinition of categorization is taking place that is far more complex and nuanced. The involvement of the nation and religion in the imagination of youth, as well as their ambivalence toward anti-colonialism, is particularly evident in relation to gender reforms.<sup>28</sup> This analysis confirms that social categorization now tends to be inclusive and diverse, rather than maintaining an exclusive and monolithic structure. This indicates a dual categorization in which individuals identify themselves as "Muslim" (a universal religious category) and "Indonesian" (a national category), and these two categories are not viewed as contradictory or zero-sum, but rather as mutually reinforcing identities. Pedersen explains that religious pluralism in Indonesia is managed through political practices, decentralization policies, and civic culture so that religion can function alongside national identity, rather than always serving as a source of conflict.<sup>29</sup>

The second process is social identification, which refers to the psychological process by which individuals not only categorize themselves as part of a group but also internalize their group membership into their self-concept. Qur'an learning facilitates identification at multiple levels: with the global ummah through universal texts and practices, and with the Indonesian locality. Raisul Umam documented that integrating local wisdom creates socially and culturally relevant education and strengthens the uniquely Indonesian Muslim identity. Raisul Umam<sup>30</sup> documented that the integration of local wisdom in Islamic education creates socially and culturally relevant learning and reinforces a distinctively Indonesian Muslim identity. This does not imitate the model of Saudi

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<sup>25</sup> McLeod, "Social Identity Theory In Psychology (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)."

<sup>26</sup> Muhamad Yusuf and Sahibul Kahfi, "Designing Multiculturalism Education : According to the Qur'an and Its Relevance in the Context of Indonesia," *JIEP: Journal of Islamic Education Papua* 2, no. 2 (2025): 129–41, <https://doi.org/10.53491/jiep.v2i2.1433>.

<sup>27</sup> This study discusses how the process of social categorization (Tajfel & Turner) shapes identity differences between different social groups. The author highlights how the in-group/out-group mechanism works in a narrative context, and how it reflects the human cognitive tendency to maintain group identity. Eunice Eshieza Ogianyo et al., "A Social Categorisation Study of Elnathan John's Born on A Tuesday," *Beyond Babel: BU Journal of Language, Literature and Humanities* 9, no. 1 (2025): 322–332.

<sup>28</sup> Máiread Dunne, Barbara Crossouard, and Jennifer Agbaire, "Beyond the Modern : Muslim Youth Imaginaries of Nation in Northern Nigeria," *SAGE Journals* 54, no. 6 (2020): 1122–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520949835>.

<sup>29</sup> Lene Pedersen and Lene Pedersen, "Religious Pluralism in Indonesia Religious Pluralism in Indonesia," *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 17, no. 5 (2016): 387–398, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2016.1218534>.

<sup>30</sup> Raisul Umam and Andi Musthafa Husain, "Pengintegrasian Kearifan Lokal Dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam : Kritikalitas Dan Alternatif Solusi Berdasarkan Literatur," *Jurnal Islam Ulil Albab* 5, no. 2 (2024): 1–12, <https://journal.uii.ac.id/Abhats/article/view/34572/17298>.

Arabia or Turkey, but instead develops an Islamic expression rooted in Nusantara culture with values such as deliberation, mutual cooperation, tolerance, and social harmony.

Analytical synthesis shows that the quality of shared experiences in the learning process has a significant influence on the strength of social identification. Ramadona found that community-based tahsin learning created strong solidarity and a shared sense of ownership through collaborative participatory practices such as collective tilawah, group tafsir discussions, and religious social activities.<sup>31</sup> These communal experiences not only teach Qur'an content but also, more fundamentally, create emotional bonds and a sense of belonging that strengthen identification with the Muslim group. This finding is consistent with Tajfel and Turner's theoretical predictions that social identification has cognitive components (knowledge about group membership), evaluative components (positive or negative judgments toward the group), and emotional components (feelings of attachment to the group). Riley noted that religious individuals face pressure to privatize their religious beliefs.<sup>32</sup> Qur'an learning in communal settings becomes a space to affirm public religious identity and resist secularization pressures that are a legacy of colonialism.<sup>33</sup> This shows that social identification through Qur'an learning has a dimension of resistance to the hegemony of secularism, which is a colonial legacy.

The third process is social comparison, which refers to the tendency of groups to compare themselves with other groups to build distinctiveness and positive self-esteem.<sup>34</sup> Social Identity Theory by Tajfel Turner predicts that social comparison leads to in-group bias, out-group derogation, or intergroup conflict when positive identity is threatened.<sup>35</sup> However, the literature on Qur'an learning in Indonesia shows a pattern that differs from classical theoretical predictions. Social comparison in this context tends to foster a competitive advantage grounded in spiritual values that advance the nation's collective progress rather than fostering antagonism toward other groups.<sup>36</sup> This constitutes a positive-sum comparison rather than a zero-sum comparison: Indonesian Muslims contribute to national development through Qur'an-based values such as honesty, hard work, and social justice, without claiming superiority over other groups. Abdullah Saeed explains a contextual hermeneutic approach that bridges Qur'an texts with contemporary realities through interpretation that includes applicative aspects, universal values, and contemporary application.<sup>37</sup> This approach reflectively compares classical interpretations with contemporary needs to determine relevance and the need for reinterpretation. Social comparison

<sup>31</sup> Syahri Ramadona, "Implementing Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach in Enhancing Qur'anic Literacy Through Tahsin Learning at Gampong Meunasah, Bireuen, Aceh."

<sup>32</sup> Christina Riley et al., "Surviving Secular Society: How Religious Families Maintain Faith through Community and Parenting Practices," *International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* 10, no. 3 (2021): 57–73, <https://doi.org/10.18848/2154-8633/CGP/v10i03/57-73>.

<sup>33</sup> Imas Lu'ul Jannah, "Pious yet Trendy Young Muslim: 'The Bros Team' and Public Qur'an in Indonesia," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 23, no. 2 (2022): 2–7, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v23i2.4465>.

<sup>34</sup> A brief discussion of the processes of categorization, identification, and social comparison within the framework of Social Identity Theory. Kati Kish Bar-on and Ehud Lamm, "The Interplay of Social Identity and Norm Psychology in the Evolution of Human Groups," *Philos Trans R Soc Lond B Biol Sci* 378 (1872), no. 20210412 (2023): 1–8.

<sup>35</sup> A recent review explaining Tajfel & Turner's predictions about ingroup bias and the conditions that trigger out-group derogation. Sarah Martiny and Mark Rubin, *Towards a Clearer Understanding of Social Identity Theory's Self-Esteem Hypothesis*. In S. McKeown, R. Haji, & N. Ferguson (Eds.), *Understanding Peace and Conflict through Social Identity Theory: Contemporary Global Perspectives* (Pp. 19–32). New York: Springer, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-Norway>.

<sup>36</sup> Arif Rahman, Nur Kholis, and M Yunus Abu Bakar, "Living Qur'an Approach to Improve Critical Thinking Skills in Islamic Religious Education Learning," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education (AJIE)* 8, no. 4 (2024): 1383–98.

<sup>37</sup> Widodo Hami, "Kontekstualisasi Makna Pendidikan Dalam Al- Qur'an Perspektif Hermeneutika Abdullah Saeed," *Al-Nizam: Indonesian Journal of Research and Community Service* 2, no. 2 (2024): 49–69.

is often internal, comparing various streams within Islam itself. Arkoun, in Hidayatulloh, emphasizes the need to deconstruct and reread Islamic texts and traditions to make them more adaptive and reflective of contemporary challenges. Internal comparison can be productive in a spirit of dialogue or conflictual in a spirit of exclusivism.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Integration and Dialectics of Both Theoretical Frameworks***

Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction Theory and Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory have significant points of convergence and divergence in explaining the construction of religious identity through postcolonial Qur'an learning. Both theories confirm a fundamental proposition about religious identity. This proposition states that religious identity is not an essentialist substance or an inherent given, but a social construction formed through complex interactions among individuals, social structures, and reference groups. Through complementary mechanisms: externalization, objectivation, internalization (macro structural level), categorization, identification, and social comparison (micro psychological level). Berger and Luckmann help explain the macro- and meso-level mechanisms by which learning practices are expressed, institutionalized, and experienced within a broader social context. Meanwhile, Tajfel and Turner help explain the micro-psychological mechanisms by which individuals categorize themselves, identify with groups, and engage in social comparison.

Both theories operate at different levels: Berger and Luckmann explain macrostructural mechanisms (curriculum, institutions), while Tajfel and Turner explain micro psychological processes (identification, self-esteem). This integrated framework unpacks the dialectical interplay between structural objectivation, social categorization, and individual internalization. However, both theories have limitations: the absence of an explicit power analysis. In the postcolonial context, colonial legacies operate as a regime of truth that defines legitimate knowledge and acceptable identity (Rizvi, Mushthafa). The findings of Qur'an learning in Indonesia also show the limitations of Tajfel and Turner's prediction that Indonesian Muslims instead developed competitive comparison into contributive comparison, which emphasizes tolerance and collaboration.<sup>39</sup> This finding shows the limitation of Tajfel Turner in non-Western contexts and the importance of theoretical contextualization. Rizvi explains that decolonizing Islamic studies must interrogate the politics of knowledge.<sup>40</sup> This power analysis deepens both theories for postcolonial contexts.

To overcome this limitation, the analysis of postcolonial Qur'an learning requires supplementation with a more explicit power analytical framework. This framework includes concepts of epistemic violence and cultural hegemony from the postcolonial tradition (Spivak, Said, Fanon) and of disciplinary power and governmentality from Foucault.<sup>41</sup> The reviewed literature shows that colonial legacies in Qur'an learning operate as objective structures (objectivation in Berger and Luckmann's terminology) and social categorization (in Tajfel Turner's terminology).

<sup>38</sup> Deki Marizaldi, Muhammad Herdi Pratama, and Abipraya Guntur Sulatiasto, "From Clicks to Violence : A Study on the Role of Social Media in Radicalization and Terrorism," *Jurnal AKTA* 12, no. 2 (2025): 417–33, <https://doi.org/DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.30659/akta.v12i2.44872>.

<sup>39</sup> Muh Habibulloh, "The Role of Islamic Education in Building Interreligious Tolerance in Indonesia," *IJEMR: International Journal of Education Management and Religion* 1, no. 2 (2024): 63–82.

<sup>40</sup> Sajjad Rizvi, "Reversing the Gaze? Or Decolonizing the Study of the Qur'an," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 33 (2021): 122–38, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-12341511>.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph E.B. Lumbard, "Decolonizing Qur'anic Studies," *Religions* 13, no. 2 (2022): 2–14, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020176>.

More fundamentally, this legacy functions as a regime of truth that defines legitimate knowledge, valid methodologies, and acceptable identities. Fazlur Rahman in Wely emphasizes the need for a contextual and interdisciplinary approach in Islamic studies, which does not merely accept Western categories but also develops methodologies relevant to the experiences and history of Muslims themselves.<sup>42</sup> In the context of Qur'an learning, this means questioning not only the curriculum content (what is taught) but also the form and structure of learning (how it is taught, who has the authority to teach, what power relations are reproduced in pedagogical interactions). This power analysis does not replace Berger and Luckmann or Tajfel Turner, but deepens and critiques the assumptions of both theories for postcolonial contexts.

### ***The Impact of Colonialism on the Epistemology of Qur'an Learning***

The analysis of the impact of colonialism on the epistemology of Qur'an learning in this study used an integrative framework that connects the structural legacy of colonialism with the transformation of Indonesian Muslims' collective identity. Contrasting the descriptive approaches in previous studies, this section systematically examines how the colonial epistemic hierarchy operates through the mechanisms of externalization, objectification, and internalization. In addition, this section explores how decolonial responses shape new patterns of social categorization, identification, and comparison. Colonialism creates an epistemological dichotomy through Western education's separation of science and religion, linguistic hierarchies privileging Dutch or English over Arabic, and regulations marginalizing traditional institutions like pesantren.<sup>43</sup> Within Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction Theory framework, this dichotomy becomes objectified as a taken for granted reality that legitimizes colonial epistemology's superiority over local knowledge systems a constructed hierarchy that persists into the postcolonial era.<sup>44</sup> Colonial dichotomy institutionalized in national curricula creates dual identity crisis: educated Muslims experience cognitive dissonance between Islamic tradition (religious in-group) and modernity aspirations (national in-group). However, Indonesian Muslims developed inclusive common ingroup identity bridging this dichotomy through flexible, permeable categorization.<sup>45</sup> Fachrurazi<sup>46</sup> showed that the identity of Indonesian Muslims developed an inclusive common ingroup identity that bridges this dichotomy.

This phenomenon explains the flexibility of categorization in Social Identity Theory more than the determinism of Berger and Luckmann, showing that psychosocial agency can transform objective structures through creative recategorization. Fachrurazi<sup>47</sup> explained that nationalism and religious identity are not contradictory in the Indonesian context, rejecting the assumption of classical social identity theory that tends to view multiple group membership as a source of conflict

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<sup>42</sup> Wely Dozan, "Dinamika Dan Paradigma Studi Alquran: Kontekstualisasi Penafsiran Ibn Kathi'r Dan Fazlurrahman," *DIYA' AL-AFKAR: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Al-Hadis* 8, no. 1 (2020): 32–48.

<sup>43</sup> Blessing T Emmanuel, "Decolonizing the Academic Study of Science and Religion? Engaging Wynter's Epistemic Disobedience," *Religions* 15, no. 15 (2024): 2–11.

<sup>44</sup> Saiful Umam Idris Thaha\*, Ismatu Ropi, "Religion And The Identity Of Independent Indonesia: A Study on Religious Narratives According to the Founding Fathers," *ULUMUNA* 28, no. 2 (2024): 882–910.

<sup>45</sup> Muhammad Ridha, "Teori Motivasi McClelland Dan Implikasinya Dalam Pembelajaran PAI," *PALAPA* 8, no. 1 (2020): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.36088/palapa.v8i1.673>.

<sup>46</sup> Fachrurazi, Sahat Aditua Fandhiya Silalahi, and Fauziah, "Can Nationalism and Religious Approaches Be Harmonized? Three-Way Interaction Effects on Small Business Consumer Brand Identification," *Cogent Business and Management* 11, no. 1 (2024): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2321943>.

<sup>47</sup> Fachrurazi, Silalahi, and Fauziah.

or ambivalence. This finding shows that categorization is permeable and inclusive, reflecting the influence of Nusantara Islamic tradition, which emphasizes inclusivity and tolerance.

Literature synthesis identifies three externalization strategies resisting colonial objectivization: 1) Epistemological reintegration, Maulana<sup>48</sup> documents curricular reforms eliminating religious-secular dichotomies, externalizing a tawhidic worldview positioning all knowledge as unified—rejecting colonial epistemological fragmentation. 2) Pedagogical contextualization, local wisdom-based teaching models improve learning outcomes while affirming Indonesian Muslim identity—a hybrid critical stance avoiding both colonial mimicry and reactive particularism.<sup>49</sup> 3) Arabic language revitalization, Challenging Dutch-era linguistic hierarchies that relegated Arabic to ritual functions, educators reclaim Arabic as a scientific language, transmitting Qur'anic meanings as a living intellectual tradition rather than fossilized ritual.<sup>50</sup>

A comparative engagement with Social Identity Theory elucidates that Tajfel and Turner postulated that groups facing identity threats would navigate towards social creativity (redefining comparison criteria) or social competition (direct out-group rivalry). However, the data show that Indonesian Muslims choose a third path: positive distinctiveness through synthesis, namely constructing an identity that is a synthesis of universal Islam, Nusantara wisdom, and selective modernity. Raisul Umam<sup>51</sup> documented that the integration of local wisdom in Islamic Religious Education learning creates education that is socially and culturally relevant and strengthens a distinctively Indonesian Muslim identity, which does not imitate the model of Saudi Arabia or Turkey, but develops an Islamic expression rooted in the Nusantara culture with values such as deliberation, mutual cooperation, tolerance, and social harmony.

This strategy is different from the classical predictions of Tajfel Turner that were developed in Western contexts, in which groups tend to choose one of the two strategies. In the postcolonial Indonesian context, social comparison is not directed toward proving superiority over the West, which would reproduce the colonial logic, but toward building an autonomous alternative episteme. Both theories converge in explaining that decolonization requires simultaneous transformation at the structural and psychosocial levels. The externalization of decolonial values in the Berger and Luckmann framework is only effective if it produces strong social identification within the Tajfel Turner framework. Ramadona<sup>52</sup> found that community-based tahsin learning created strong solidarity and a shared sense of ownership through collaborative participatory practices such as collective *tilawah* (communal Qur'an recitation), group *tafsir* discussions (collective interpretation of Qur'an verses), and religious social activities. These communal experiences create emotional bonds and a sense of belonging, thereby strengthening identification with the Muslim group.

This conceptual mapping identifies the existence of a spectrum of internalization, in which identity transformation depends on the synergy between pedagogical interactions and the resonance of learning content with the learner's reality. Transformative internalization occurs when

<sup>48</sup> Adam Maulana, “Rekonstruksi Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam Pada Masa Kolonial Belanda Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Dikotomi Pendidikan Di Indonesia,” *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan (JIP)* 3, no. 6 (2025): 617–34.

<sup>49</sup> Purwowidodo, “Experiential Learning Model Based on Local Wisdom in Learning Islamic Cultural History.”

<sup>50</sup> Afiful Ikhwan, Oktio Frenki Biantoro, and Ali Rohmad, “The Role of the Family in Internalizing Islamic Values,” *DINAMIKA ILMU*, 2019, 323–35, <https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v19i2.1746>.

<sup>51</sup> Umam and Husain, “Pengintegrasian Kearifan Lokal Dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam : Kritikalitas Dan Alternatif Solusi Berdasarkan Literatur.”

<sup>52</sup> Syahri Ramadona, “Implementing Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach in Enhancing Qur'anic Literacy Through Tahsin Learning at Gampong Meunasah, Bireuen, Aceh.”

Qur'an learning uses a contextual approach that connects the text with lived realities. Sulisworo<sup>53</sup> emphasizes that transformative education not only focuses on mastery of subject matter, but also on the internalization of spiritual and ethical values that contribute to the development of students' character. This education focuses on social interaction that enables dialogue and reflection, on reflective processes that link Qur'an texts to contemporary realities, and on active student engagement in the learning and interpretation process.

Conversely, formalistic internalization occurs when learning emphasizes memorization and ritual without critical reflection, resulting in a religious identity that is separated from everyday social practice (compartmentalized identity). Colonialism constructed the narrative that memorization is a "primitive" practice that contradicts "modern learning." The postcolonial response to this stigmatization is manifested through the reclamation of memorization as a sophisticated learning methodology. Bakah<sup>54</sup> emphasized that Qur'an memorization functions as a medium for the internalization of religious values and the formation of religious identity that goes beyond mere transmission of textual knowledge. This process involves the internalization of the ethics, morality, and worldviews contained in the Qur'an.

Comparative analysis demonstrates that while Berger and Luckmann conceptualize internalization as the process through which objective structures become subjective consciousness, their framework fails to account for the qualitative variations in how such internalization is experienced. Tajfel Turner explains that social identification has cognitive, evaluative, and emotional components, which help to understand why communal learning produces deeper internalization because it activates the emotional dimension of identification. The theoretical synthesis elucidates a dialectical feedback mechanism illustrating the continuous reshaping of structural forces and individual agency. Within this framework, the objective structure of learning shapes the quality of communal interaction, which subsequently drives social identification and determines the depth of internalization. Gaya and Ahmad<sup>55</sup> identified that for postcolonial Muslim youth in Indonesia, Qur'an memorization becomes an important framework for facing contemporary social challenges such as popular culture pressures and Islamophobia, which are often rooted in colonial narratives.

The coloniality within Qur'an interpretation education manifests as a preference for Western hermeneutical frameworks over classical Islamic scholarly traditions. The postcolonial response develops an autonomous and contextual hermeneutical approach. Aulia and Faizin,<sup>56</sup> through the *Tadabbur Qur'an Model* (a reflective understanding of Qur'an verses for real-life application), it emphasized the importance of deep reflection and the internalization of Qur'an values as the foundation for the formation of character and spirituality. This approach builds a religious identity that is intellectually mature, critical, and responsive to contemporary challenges. Anti-hegemonic contextualization uses Qur'an interpretation to criticize exploitative socio-economic structures

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<sup>53</sup> Dwi Sulisworo, "Transformative Education in Character Development of Students in Religious-Based Schools: Narrative Review."

<sup>54</sup> Bakah, "Etika Murid Kepada Guru Dalam Surah Al-Kahfi Ayat 65 -70 Dan Implementasinya Pada Pendidikan Modern."

<sup>55</sup> Gaya and Ahmad, "The Concept of Islamic Identity and Its Importance for Muslim Youth."

<sup>56</sup> Muhammad Hizba Aulia and M Nur Faizin, "Qur'anic Tadabbur Models for Enhancing Students Character and Spiritual Awareness," *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset Dan Kajian Keislaman* 14, no. April (2025): 133–56, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.35878/islamicreview.v14.i1.1497>.

inherited from colonialism. Sufyan Muttaqin<sup>57</sup> explained that integrating Qur'an interpretation with various modern disciplines enables a more comprehensive and relevant interpretation of contemporary issues. Ainin and Zulianah<sup>58</sup> added that Qur'an interpretation learning in the context of contemporary Islamic education helps individuals internalize religious values that emphasize social awareness, moral responsibility, and a commitment to justice.

### ***A Postcolonial Synthesizing Model***

This section integrates various conceptual propositions into a theoretical model that explains how Qur'anic learning shapes postcolonial religious identity, identifying convergences, divergences, and theoretical limitations. Berger and Luckmann's theory predicts that the construction of social reality occurs through a stable, self-reinforcing cycle of externalization, objectification, and internalization. However, postcolonial analysis of Qur'anic learning conceptualizes fundamental changes: this cycle is contested and nonlinear, in which each moment becomes an arena of struggle between the reproduction of coloniality and decolonial efforts. Data from Purwowidodo<sup>59</sup> and Sulisworo<sup>60</sup> constructing the idea that the externalization of religious values serves as an effort to build an alternative episteme that rejects colonial dichotomies. Purwowidodo justifies that local wisdom-based learning models transcend cognitive orientation and motivation, serving as an act of decolonization against universal values. Sulisworo<sup>61</sup> positioning the internalization of spiritual and ethical values as the core of transformative education, rather than placing mastery of material as the ultimate goal. This rejects the colonial educational model that separates moral knowledge from intellectual knowledge.

These findings extend Berger and Luckmann by showing that, in the postcolonial context, externalization has an epistemological-political dimension. Mushthafa<sup>62</sup> explained that the decolonization of Islamic studies requires a critical approach to the politics of knowledge, questioning how academic categories such as "modernity," "rationality," and "objectivity" are products of a colonial genealogy of power. In the context of Qur'an learning, this means questioning not only curriculum content but also the form and structure of learning, as well as the power relations reproduced in pedagogical interactions. Postcolonial externalization always involves meta externalization: critical reflection on the process of externalization itself to identify hidden traces of colonial hegemony.

The moment of objectivation undergoes a significant transformation, producing structural ambivalence. Istikomah<sup>63</sup> documented efforts to integrate institutions and curricula to eliminate the dichotomy between religious and general knowledge as decolonial objectivation. However, Mushthafa<sup>64</sup> criticized pedagogical relations that reproduce the authoritative colonial model. This

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<sup>57</sup> Sufyan Muttaqin, "Pendekatan Interdisipliner Dalam Tafsir Al-Qur'an : Integrasi Antara Ilmu Tafsir Dan Ilmu Sosial," *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah, Pendidikan Dasar* 10, no. 01 (2025): 110–17.

<sup>58</sup> Dewi Zulianah Nurul Ainin and Dewi Zulianah, "Antara Aqidah Dan Akhlak Dalam Pendidikan Islam: Suatu Tinjauan Kritis," *Kurikula Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2021): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.56997/kurikula.v6i1.543>.

<sup>59</sup> Purwowidodo, "Experiential Learning Model Based on Local Wisdom in Learning Islamic Cultural History."

<sup>60</sup> Dwi Sulisworo, "Transformative Education in Character Development of Students in Religious-Based Schools : Narrative Review."

<sup>61</sup> Dwi Sulisworo.

<sup>62</sup> Mushthafa, "Decolonizing Javanese-Islamic Identity in the Discourses of Contemporary Indonesian Islamic Studies."

<sup>63</sup> Istikomah, "Integrasi Ilmu Sebuah Konsep Pendidikan Islam Ideal."

<sup>64</sup> Mushthafa, "Decolonizing Javanese-Islamic Identity in the Discourses of Contemporary Indonesian Islamic Studies."

contradiction confirms Berger and Luckmann's prediction that objectivation creates structures that appear external and objective, yet in the postcolonial context, the same institutions can function as instruments of decolonization and simultaneously reproduce coloniality. Ramadona<sup>65</sup> found that community-based *tahsin* (the improvement and refinement of Qur'an recitation) learning fostered strong solidarity through collaborative, participatory practices, showing that objectivation through informal communities produces a different quality of identity formation compared to that in more hierarchical formal institutions.

Berger and Luckmann are insufficient to explain why the same objectivation produces different trajectories. The explanation requires an analysis of the quality of social interaction and the distribution of power, dimensions that are better captured by Tajfel Turner. Cadge and Konieczny<sup>66</sup> noted that involvement in religious organizations provides a space for exploring religious identity, which, in the Indonesian context, is reflected in a complex institutional evolution responding to structural colonial pressures. Objectivation is not a uniform mechanical process, but highly depends on the dynamics of power and agency within social interactions. Internalization forms a continuum of varying quality, ranging from transformative to superficial levels. Sulisworo<sup>67</sup> explained that transformative education emphasized the internalization of spiritual and ethical values through dialogical social interaction, reflective processes that connected the Qur'an text with contemporary reality, and active student engagement. Conversely, learning that emphasizes formalistic memorization results in superficial internalization in which religious identity becomes separated from everyday social practices. The analysis identifies three critical factors: the relevance of content to concrete life experiences, the quality of dialogical versus authoritative pedagogical interactions, and communal support that strengthens value commitment. These factors indicate that postcolonial internalization does not automatically follow objectivation, but is instead mediated by the critical agency of individuals and communities.

The reclamation of memorization as a sophisticated methodology demonstrates the complexity of internalization. Colonialism constructed the narrative that memorization was a "primitive" practice opposed to "modern learning." Bakah<sup>68</sup> emphasized that memorizing the Qur'an functioned as a medium for internalizing religious values that went beyond the mere transmission of textual knowledge, involving the internalization of ethics and a worldview through textual embodiment. Gaya and Ahmad<sup>69</sup> identified that for postcolonial Muslim youth, Qur'anic memorization became an essential framework for confronting contemporary social challenges such as pressures from popular culture and Islamophobia, which were rooted in colonial narratives. The Tajfel-Turner theory, developed in Western contexts with the assumption of binary categorization and competitive comparison, underwent significant modification when applied to Qur'anic learning in Indonesia. Pertiwi<sup>70</sup> found that the strategy of an "inclusive common ingroup identity" successfully bridged religious orientation and national unity, indicating that categorization could be

<sup>65</sup> Syahri Ramadona, "Implementing Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach in Enhancing Qur'anic Literacy Through Tahsin Learning at Gampong Meunasah, Bireuen, Aceh."

<sup>66</sup> Cadge and Konieczny, "Hidden in Plain Sight: The Significance of Religion and Spirituality in Secular Organizations."

<sup>67</sup> Dwi Sulisworo, "Transformative Education in Character Development of Students in Religious-Based Schools: Narrative Review."

<sup>68</sup> Bakah, "Etika Murid Kepada Guru Dalam Surah Al-Kahfi Ayat 65 -70 Dan Implementasinya Pada Pendidikan Modern."

<sup>69</sup> Gaya and Ahmad, "The Concept of Islamic Identity and Its Importance for Muslim Youth."

<sup>70</sup> Pertiwi and Faturochman, "Integration of Social Identities in Interreligious-Group Relations."

inclusive and multiple. Fachrurazi<sup>71</sup> explained that nationalism and religious identity are not contradictory in the Indonesian context, rejecting the assumptions of classical social identity theory that view multiple group membership as a source of conflict. Categorization in Qur'anic learning is hierarchical (nested) and permeable. Individuals identify themselves simultaneously as universal Muslims, Indonesian Muslims, and Indonesian citizens, in which the three categories reinforce one another.<sup>72</sup> This pattern reflects the influence of the *Islamic Nusantara* tradition, which emphasizes inclusivity and tolerance.

Social identification also shows a different pattern. Raisul Umam<sup>73</sup> documented that the integration of local wisdom creates a distinct Indonesian Muslim identity that does not imitate Saudi Arabia or Turkey, but instead develops an expression of Islam rooted in Nusantara culture, with the values of deliberation (musyawarah), mutual cooperation (gotong royong), and tolerance. Identification requires meaningful cultural substance, not merely minimal categorization as predicted by Tajfel-Turner. In the non-Western collectivist context, identification has a cultural-ethical component that defines the substance of identity. Identification is not merely belonging but becoming: a transformation of the self through the internalization of specific communal values. Social comparison diversifies the most significant differences from the Tajfel-Turner model. Classical theory predicts that comparison leads to in-group bias and intergroup competition. However, a literature search reveals a different discourse. Abdullah Saeed explains that the contextual hermeneutic approach produces reflective comparison: comparing classical interpretations with contemporary needs to identify relevance, and comparing the practices of Indonesian Muslims with those of Muslims in other countries for mutual learning rather than proving superiority. The comparison is directed toward positive-sum distinctiveness: "We as Indonesian Muslims can contribute to national progress through the values of honesty and social justice from the Qur'an," rather than "We are better than other groups." This is a contributive comparison that rejects the colonial zero-sum logic.

Both theories converge confirming religious identity as social construction at different levels: Berger-Luckmann (macro-structural) and Tajfel-Turner (micro-psychological). Integration conceptualizes a multilevel dialectic in which structural objectification forms categorization, which influences internalization. However, both lack power analysis crucial for postcolonial contexts. Supplementing with postcolonial frameworks analyzing epistemic violence and cultural hegemony interrogates knowledge politics defining legitimate epistemology. The synthesis produces a multidimensional model of postcolonial identity construction that operates through three dialectical axes. The temporal axis involves: (1) deconstructing colonial vestiges by challenging the epistemological binaries that have historically marginalized indigenous knowledge; (2) the reconstruction of an autonomous framework based on the classical Islamic tradition and the contemporary context; (3) co-construction through inclusive dialogue between various currents within Islam and with other traditions. These three phases do not operate sequentially; instead, they function simultaneously and affect one another. The social axis includes: (1) the individual level that involves the internalization of Qur'anic values free from colonial distortion; (2) the

<sup>71</sup> Fachrurazi, Silalahi, and Fauziah, "Can Nationalism and Religious Approaches Be Harmonized? Three-Way Interaction Effects on Small Business Consumer Brand Identification."

<sup>72</sup> Rizwan Ahmad Ibrar Bhatt, Othman Z Barnawi, "Exploring a Sociolinguistics of Islam," *Applied Linguistics* xx, no. June (2025): 1–20.

<sup>73</sup> Umam and Husain, "Pengintegrasian Kearifan Lokal Dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam : Kritikalitas Dan Alternatif Solusi Berdasarkan Literatur."

communal level that constructs the collective identity of Indonesian Muslims by integrating universal Islamic principles with local wisdom; (3) the national level that integrates religious identity with Indonesian citizenship. Pertiwi confirmed that the inclusive common ingroup identity strategy succeeded in bridging religious orientation and national unity.

The cultural axis encompasses three dimensions: universality (universal Islamic principles), locality (Nusantara wisdom and indigenous traditions), and globality (connection with the global Muslim community without mimicry). Umam documented that integrating local wisdom creates a distinctive Indonesian Muslim identity rooted in Nusantara culture.<sup>74</sup> This model operates recursively, with transformations along one axis influencing others. Decolonization along the temporal axis enables inclusive identity construction socially, facilitating the integration of universality and locality culturally. This analysis conceptualizes decolonization as an ongoing process, not a final destination. Qur'anic learning in postcolonial Indonesia becomes a dialectical arena where Muslims actively construct revelation's meaning through critical engagement with colonial history, local traditions, and modernity.

## Conclusion

This study examines how Qur'anic education shapes religious identity in post-colonial Indonesia. The process involves a dynamic interaction between learners, communities, and institutions, rather than mere passive knowledge transmission. This finding challenges traditional theories that viewed religious education as simply teachers passing down fixed traditions. Integrating Berger-Luckmann and Tajfel-Turner frameworks produced three findings: (1) colonial epistemological dichotomy institutionalized as a regime of truth creating a dual identity crisis; (2) decolonial responses through epistemological reintegration, pedagogical contextualization, and indigenous methodology reclamation; (3) identity formation deviating from theoretical predictions through nested categorization, substantive identification, and contributive comparison, indicating Western-centric theory limitations.

This study contributed to the discourse of contemporary Islamic thought in three ways. First, it developed a decolonial epistemology that positioned Qur'anic learning as an active epistemological praxis that transcended the anti-Western versus pro-Western dichotomy toward an alternative episteme grounded in Islamic tradition, yet critical of hegemony. Second, it demonstrated that historical power structures from the colonial era operated not only at the discursive level but also manifested in everyday pedagogical interactions. This finding filled a gap in postcolonial Islamic studies, which were often disconnected from grassroots practices. Third, it articulated a hybrid critical identity theory that integrated universal Islamic principles with Nusantara wisdom while rejecting colonial mimicry and reactive indigenization.

The practical implications covered three main areas. In Islamic education policy, integrated curriculum reform was required to dissolve the colonial dichotomy, to develop educator capacity in critical postcolonial pedagogy, and to support institutional pluralism as an epistemological laboratory. In Qur'anic curriculum design, methodological pluralism was needed to balance literacy, memorization, and contextual interpretation; contextual hermeneutics that integrated classical exegesis with contemporary realities; and critical digital literacy to navigate online religious content. In postcolonial Muslim studies, this study opened the way for cross-national comparative research,

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<sup>74</sup> Umam and Husain.

longitudinal analyses of generational shifts, and intersectional approaches to gender, class, and ethnicity.

The proposed Multidimensional Model of Postcolonial Identity Construction operates through three dialectical axes that influence one another in a non-linear and recursive manner. The temporal axis includes the deconstruction of the colonial legacy, the reconstruction of an autonomous framework based on classical tradition and contemporary context, and the co-construction through inclusive dialogue. The social axis involves the individual internalization of Qur'an values free from colonial distortion, the construction of a collective identity that integrates universal Islam with local wisdom, and the integration of religious identity with Indonesian citizenship. The cultural axis includes engagement with universal Islamic principles, the integration of Nusantara wisdom and indigenous pedagogical traditions, and connectivity with the global Muslim community without losing authenticity. The dialectical and recursive nature of this model posits that decolonization is not a linear trajectory with a finite endpoint, but rather an ongoing process that continuously unpacks latent colonial structures.

Future research needs to develop seven directions: grounded ethnographic inquiries to map the micro-dynamics of power within pedagogical interactions; comparative postcolonial analyses with other Muslim countries; longitudinal cohort studies to assess long term impacts; digital transformation research to investigate whether technology facilitates decolonization or reproduces new hegemonies; intersectionality approaches to analyze internal power asymmetries; pedagogical intervention experiments to evaluate the impact of decolonial curricula; and theoretical refinement by involving the frameworks of decolonial feminism, critical race theory, and actor network theory. Qur'an learning in Indonesia has become a vital arena of epistemological liberation, offering an alternative model for global Muslim communities to respond to the challenges of modernity without reproducing Western-centric paradigms or falling into reactive fundamentalism.

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