

RECONSTRUCTING CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT: A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the development of the reconstruction of contemporary Islamic intellectual thought through a literature review approach. The study employs a qualitative method by examining various academic journal articles, scholarly books, and relevant scientific publications discussing the reform of modern Islamic thought. The selected sources include publications from 2020 to 2025 as well as seminal works of influential Muslim thinkers such as Muhammad Abduh, Muhammad Iqbal, and Fazlur Rahman as theoretical foundations. The findings indicate that the reconstruction of contemporary Islamic intellectual thought revolves around several major themes, including the reform of Islamic epistemology and ijtihad methodology, the transformation of Islamic education, modern Islamic political and civilizational discourse, the reconstruction of hermeneutics and theology, and the development of gender and Islamic economic perspectives. The literature further reveals that contemporary Islamic thought increasingly adopts contextual approaches aimed at bridging classical Islamic intellectual traditions with the demands of global modernity. Therefore, the reconstruction of Islamic intellectual thought extends beyond theoretical discourse and contributes to institutional reform, socio-political governance, and the advancement of Islamic civilization in response to contemporary challenges.

Keywords: contemporary Islamic thought, Islamic intellectual reconstruction, literature review

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perkembangan rekonstruksi pemikiran intelektual Islam kontemporer melalui pendekatan kajian literatur. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan literature review terhadap berbagai artikel jurnal, buku akademik, dan publikasi ilmiah yang relevan dengan tema pembaruan pemikiran Islam modern. Sumber literatur dipilih dari publikasi akademik yang terbit antara tahun 2020 hingga 2025 serta karya-karya klasik pemikir Islam modern seperti Muhammad Abduh, Muhammad Iqbal, dan Fazlur Rahman sebagai landasan teoretis. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa rekonstruksi pemikiran intelektual Islam kontemporer berkembang dalam beberapa tema utama, yaitu reformasi epistemologi dan metodologi ijtihad, transformasi pendidikan Islam, pemikiran politik dan peradaban Islam modern, rekonstruksi hermeneutika dan teologi, serta penguatan diskursus gender dan ekonomi Islam. Literatur juga menunjukkan bahwa pemikiran Islam kontemporer cenderung mengedepankan pendekatan kontekstual yang berupaya

menjembatani antara tradisi intelektual klasik dengan tuntutan modernitas global. Dengan demikian, rekonstruksi pemikiran Islam tidak hanya bersifat teoretis, tetapi juga berimplikasi pada reformasi institusi pendidikan, tata kelola sosial-politik, serta pengembangan peradaban Islam yang lebih adaptif terhadap dinamika zaman.

Kata kunci: *pemikiran Islam kontemporer, rekonstruksi intelektual Islam, kajian literatur*

INTRODUCTION

The reconstruction of contemporary Islamic intellectual thought has become a significant topic in modern Islamic studies, particularly in response to the complex challenges of modernity, globalization, and sociopolitical transformation. Over the past century, Muslim intellectuals and scholars have attempted to reinterpret classical Islamic traditions in ways that maintain theological authenticity while addressing new historical realities. This intellectual endeavor often involves revisiting foundational sources, redefining the role of *ijtihad*, and promoting dialogue between revelation and rational inquiry. Contemporary scholarship suggests that the reconstruction of Islamic thought is not merely a theological project but also a broader epistemological and sociocultural effort aimed at aligning Islamic intellectual heritage with the demands of modern societies (Hafith et al., 2025; Halilović, 2020; Rustaman et al., 2025; Zulkarnain, 2023).

A major theme in the literature concerns the **modernization of Islamic epistemology and the revitalization of *ijtihad* as a methodological framework for interpreting Islamic sources**. Scholars frequently highlight the intellectual legacy of reformist thinkers such as Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Abduh, and Fazlur Rahman, who argued for dynamic reinterpretations of Islamic teachings that integrate rationality and historical consciousness. For instance, Iqbal's call for the reconstruction of religious thought emphasized the necessity of renewing Islamic philosophy and theology through critical engagement with modern intellectual traditions (Mir, 2022; Tasbolat et al., 2022; Yossar, 2025). Similarly, the reformist projects of Abduh and Tahtawi promoted rational exegesis and contextual understanding of Islamic teachings to address social and intellectual transformations brought by modernity (Adam, 2023; Aulia F. Rahman, 2024). These studies collectively demonstrate a recurring scholarly emphasis on reopening the gates of *ijtihad*, discouraging rigid adherence to *taqlid*, and situating Islamic texts within their broader socio-historical contexts (Mohd Waffi Albaraq Bin Mokmin Mokmin et al., 2025; Muthi et al., 2025; Rustaman et al., 2025).

Another prominent dimension in the literature concerns the role of Islamic education as a key vehicle for intellectual reconstruction. Numerous studies highlight how reformist thinkers sought to reshape Islamic educational institutions by integrating modern sciences, expanding curricula, and reformulating pedagogical objectives. Educational reform initiatives—ranging from madrasa modernization to university transformation—are often viewed as practical mechanisms for implementing broader intellectual renewal within Muslim societies (Fitriana & Syahidin, 2021; Khoirudin et al., 2020; Mahmudah et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, the transformation of Islamic educational institutions and movements such as Muhammadiyah illustrate how reformist ideas have

influenced curriculum development, the integration of religious and secular knowledge, and the promotion of maqasid al-shariah-oriented education (Mujiburrohman & Hadiwijaya, 2025; Mustafidah & Susanto, 2022). Such developments demonstrate how educational reform has functioned as a strategic platform for bridging Islamic intellectual heritage with contemporary knowledge systems.

Beyond epistemology and education, contemporary literature also explores the expansion of Islamic intellectual reconstruction into political, social, and civilizational domains. Scholars have analyzed how modern Muslim thinkers reinterpret issues such as governance, democracy, gender participation, and economic justice within Islamic frameworks. For example, debates on Islamic political thought often examine how reformist thinkers reinterpret the relationship between religion and state, emphasizing principles such as shura, social justice, and democratic participation (Badawi et al., 2024; Nisa, 2025; Rahman, 2020). In addition, emerging studies highlight the growing attention to gender equality, women's leadership, and social inclusion as important components of contemporary Islamic discourse (Munir et al., 2024). Parallel discussions in Islamic economics also demonstrate attempts to reconstruct economic ethics and institutional frameworks capable of addressing global capitalist structures while maintaining Islamic moral principles (Razali et al., 2020).

Despite the growing body of literature on Islamic intellectual reform, the field remains characterized by diverse interpretations, methodological debates, and varying degrees of engagement with modernity. While some scholars emphasize contextual *ijtihad* and hermeneutical reinterpretation of Islamic sources, others prioritize institutional reform, educational transformation, or socio-political engagement as the primary pathways for intellectual renewal (Mahmudah et al., 2023; Mokmin et al., 2025; Tasbolat et al., 2022). This diversity of perspectives reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of contemporary Islamic intellectual discourse. Therefore, a systematic synthesis of these scholarly contributions is necessary to identify the dominant themes, conceptual trajectories, and ongoing challenges in the reconstruction of contemporary Islamic intellectual thought. This study seeks to address this need by conducting a critical literature review that maps the major debates, theoretical frameworks, and research trends shaping the discourse on contemporary Islamic intellectual reconstruction.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative literature review approach to analyze and synthesize scholarly discussions on the reconstruction of contemporary Islamic intellectual thought. The literature review method allows researchers to systematically examine previous studies, identify recurring themes, and evaluate theoretical and methodological trends in the field. The data for this research were obtained from academic publications such as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference papers discussing Islamic intellectual reform, modern Islamic thought, epistemological reconstruction, and contemporary Islamic discourse. These sources were collected through academic databases including Google Scholar and other reputable academic repositories, focusing

primarily on works published within the last two decades while also incorporating seminal works by influential reformist thinkers such as Muhammad Abduh, Muhammad Iqbal, and Fazlur Rahman to provide historical and theoretical context.

The analysis process involved thematic synthesis, in which the selected literature was systematically reviewed, categorized, and interpreted to identify dominant themes in the reconstruction of modern Islamic thought. Key themes examined in this study include the reform of Islamic epistemology and *ijtihad* methodology, the transformation of Islamic education, political and civilizational discourse, gender participation, and the development of Islamic economics. Each source was critically evaluated based on its conceptual contributions, methodological approach, and relevance to contemporary debates within Islamic intellectual studies. Through this analytical process, the study aims to map the intellectual landscape of contemporary Islamic thought and highlight the major theoretical directions, debates, and research gaps that shape ongoing discussions about the reconstruction of Islamic intellectual traditions in the modern era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mapping the Landscape of Contemporary Islamic Intellectual Thought

The literature on contemporary Islamic intellectual thought demonstrates a significant expansion over the last two decades, particularly after 2020 when discussions surrounding modernization, globalization, and digital transformation intensified. A systematic review of recent scholarship indicates that contemporary Islamic intellectual discourse has shifted from a primarily theological debate toward a multidimensional framework involving epistemology, politics, education, gender studies, and socio-economic development. Scholars increasingly recognize that Islamic thought must respond to modern realities while maintaining continuity with classical intellectual traditions (Hafith et al., 2025; Halilović, 2020).

Many contemporary studies highlight the importance of reconstructing Islamic intellectual frameworks to address modern societal challenges such as secularization, democratic governance, economic inequality, and digital communication. In this context, reconstruction refers not to the rejection of classical tradition but rather to the reinterpretation of Islamic intellectual heritage through contextual methodologies such as historical hermeneutics, *maqasid al-shariah* analysis, and contextual *ijtihad* (Rustaman et al., 2025; Tasbolat et al., 2022). These approaches emphasize the necessity of balancing continuity and change within Islamic intellectual traditions.

A number of scholars have also noted that contemporary Islamic thought is characterized by the emergence of diverse intellectual approaches. Some scholars emphasize rationalist reinterpretation and epistemological renewal, while others focus on institutional reforms, social justice, or cultural adaptation. This diversity reflects the pluralistic nature of Muslim societies and demonstrates that contemporary Islamic thought cannot be reduced to a single ideological framework (Mokmin et al., 2025).

To better understand the development of contemporary Islamic intellectual discourse, this literature review categorized recent studies into six thematic clusters: (1) epistemological reconstruction and *ijtihad*, (2) reform of Islamic education, (3) political and civilizational thought, (4) hermeneutical and theological renewal, (5) gender discourse, and (6) socio-economic and civilizational development.

Epistemological Reconstruction and the Renewal of *Ijtihad*

One of the most prominent themes in contemporary Islamic intellectual discourse is the reconstruction of Islamic epistemology and the renewal of *ijtihad*. Recent studies argue that traditional modes of interpretation often relied heavily on classical jurisprudential frameworks that were developed within specific historical contexts. Consequently, many scholars advocate for a methodological renewal that allows Islamic intellectual traditions to respond effectively to modern challenges (Rustaman et al., 2025; Tasbolat et al., 2022).

Muhammad Iqbal’s concept of intellectual reconstruction continues to influence contemporary debates. His work emphasizes the dynamic nature of Islamic thought and encourages scholars to reinterpret Islamic teachings in dialogue with modern philosophy and science. Recent scholarship has revisited Iqbal’s ideas in the context of contemporary issues such as technological transformation, environmental ethics, and global governance (Anim, 2024; Mir, 2022; Rahman & Ashraf, 2024; Yossar, 2025).

Similarly, Fazlur Rahman’s “double movement theory” has become one of the most widely discussed methodologies for contextualizing Islamic teachings. Rahman proposed that scholars should first understand the historical context of Qur’anic revelation and then reinterpret its ethical principles in relation to contemporary circumstances. Recent research demonstrates that Rahman’s approach has been applied in studies of Islamic law, education, and political thought (Hafith et al., 2025). The following table summarizes several influential studies on epistemological reconstruction in Islamic thought between 2020 and 2025.

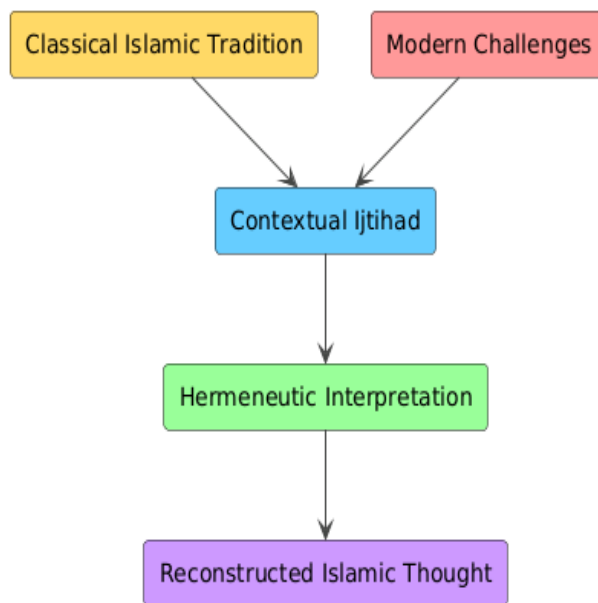
Table 1. Recent Studies on Epistemological Reconstruction in Islamic Thought (2020–2025)

AUTHOR	FOCUS	KEY CONTRIBUTION
HALILOVIĆ (2020)	Islamic intellectual reform	Emphasizes integration between tradition and modern rationality
MIR (2022)	Reconstruction of Islamic philosophy	Revisits Iqbal’s intellectual reconstruction
TASBOLAT ET AL (2022)	Methodological reform	Advocates contextual <i>ijtihad</i>
RUSTAMAN ET AL (2025)	Islamic legal methodology	Promotes historical hermeneutics
HAFITH ET AL (2025)	Qur’anic interpretation	Expands Fazlur Rahman’s double movement theory

Table 1 illustrates the growing scholarly interest in epistemological reconstruction within contemporary Islamic studies. The selected studies emphasize the need to revisit classical

methodologies of Islamic scholarship while maintaining fidelity to the ethical principles of Islamic tradition. Scholars such as Halilović (2020) argue that Islamic intellectual renewal requires a balanced engagement between classical heritage and modern philosophical discourse. Meanwhile, researchers such as Tasbolat et al. (2022) and Rustaman et al. (2025) highlight the importance of contextual ijtihad in addressing contemporary legal and ethical challenges.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Epistemological Reconstruction



The diagram illustrates the conceptual relationship between classical Islamic intellectual traditions and contemporary challenges in the process of epistemological reconstruction. The framework suggests that contextual ijtihad acts as an intermediary mechanism that bridges historical Islamic knowledge with modern social realities. Through hermeneutical interpretation, scholars reinterpret classical teachings in a way that maintains continuity with Islamic tradition while responding to modern intellectual demands.

Islamic Education as a Platform for Intellectual Reconstruction

Another significant theme emerging from recent literature is the role of Islamic education in facilitating intellectual reconstruction. Many scholars argue that educational institutions play a crucial role in shaping Islamic intellectual discourse because they function as centers for knowledge production, cultural transmission, and intellectual innovation (Fitriana & Syahidin, 2021).

Research on Islamic education reform highlights efforts to integrate modern sciences with traditional Islamic studies. This integration aims to overcome the dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge that historically characterized many educational systems in Muslim societies (Khoirudin et al., 2020). By adopting interdisciplinary curricula, Islamic universities and madrasas can cultivate scholars who are capable of addressing contemporary societal challenges from both religious and scientific perspectives.

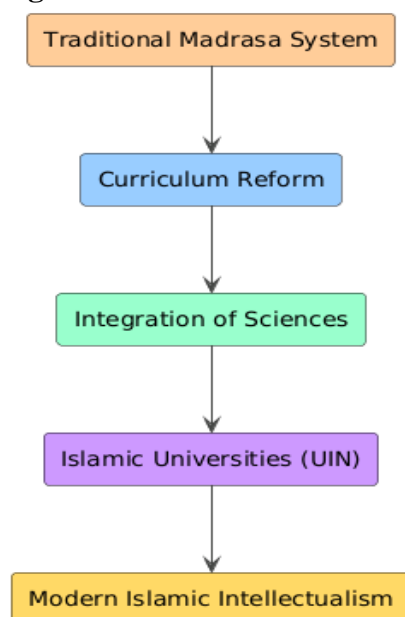
In Indonesia, several studies have examined the transformation of Islamic educational institutions into modern universities. The conversion of State Islamic Institutes (IAIN) into Islamic State Universities (UIN) reflects broader efforts to integrate Islamic scholarship with modern academic disciplines such as social sciences, economics, and natural sciences (Mahmudah et al., 2023). This transformation demonstrates how educational reform can function as a catalyst for broader intellectual renewal within Muslim societies.

Table 2. Reform of Islamic Education in Contemporary Scholarship (2020–2025)

AUTHOR	TOPIC	FINDINGS
FITRIANA & SYAHIDIN (2021)	Islamic curriculum reform	Integration of modern sciences
KHOIRUDIN ET AL (2020)	Muhammadiyah education	Reform of Islamic pedagogy
MUSTAFIDAH & SUSANTO (2022)	Islamic educational philosophy	Emphasizes character education
MAHMUDAH ET AL (2023)	Institutional transformation	Modernization of Islamic universities
MUJIBURROHMAN & HADIWIJAYA (2025)	Islamic higher education	Integration of maqasid al-shariah

Table 2 shows that educational reform has become a central strategy for implementing intellectual reconstruction within Islamic societies. The reviewed studies indicate that Islamic educational institutions increasingly emphasize interdisciplinary learning, critical thinking, and ethical responsibility. These reforms are particularly visible in Southeast Asia, where Islamic universities have adopted modern academic structures while maintaining strong commitments to Islamic values.

Figure 2. Transformation of Islamic Education



This diagram illustrates the transformation of Islamic education from traditional madrasa systems toward modern Islamic universities that integrate religious and secular sciences. The reform process involves curriculum modernization, interdisciplinary integration, and institutional restructuring. Ultimately, these reforms aim to cultivate a new generation of Muslim scholars capable of contributing to global intellectual discourse.

Political and Civilizational Dimensions of Contemporary Islamic Thought

Contemporary Islamic intellectual discourse also engages with political and civilizational questions, particularly regarding the relationship between religion, governance, and democracy. Scholars have examined how modern Muslim thinkers reinterpret classical political concepts such as shura (consultation), justice, and public welfare in relation to modern democratic institutions (Nisa, 2025; H. Rahman, 2020).

Recent literature suggests that contemporary Islamic political thought increasingly emphasizes pluralism and civic participation. Rather than advocating for rigid theocratic systems, many modern Muslim thinkers support democratic frameworks that incorporate Islamic ethical principles. This approach seeks to reconcile Islamic governance traditions with contemporary political realities.

Additionally, debates surrounding Islamic civilization often address the challenges posed by globalization, technological change, and cultural exchange. Scholars argue that Islamic intellectual traditions possess the conceptual resources necessary to engage with global modernity while preserving distinctive cultural identities (Badawi et al., 2024).

Table 3. Contemporary Islamic Political Thought (2020–2025)

AUTHOR	FOCUS	CONTRIBUTION
RAHMAN (2020)	Islamic political theory	Relationship between religion and state
ATTAMIMI ET AL (2025)	Governance in Islam	Democratic interpretation of shura
NISA (2025)	Islamic political reform	Adaptation of Islamic law
BADAWI ET AL (2024)	Islamic civilization	Balancing tradition and globalization

Table 3 demonstrates that contemporary Islamic political thought is increasingly oriented toward reconciling Islamic ethical values with modern governance structures. Rather than promoting rigid ideological models, many scholars advocate flexible political frameworks that incorporate democratic participation, social justice, and ethical governance.

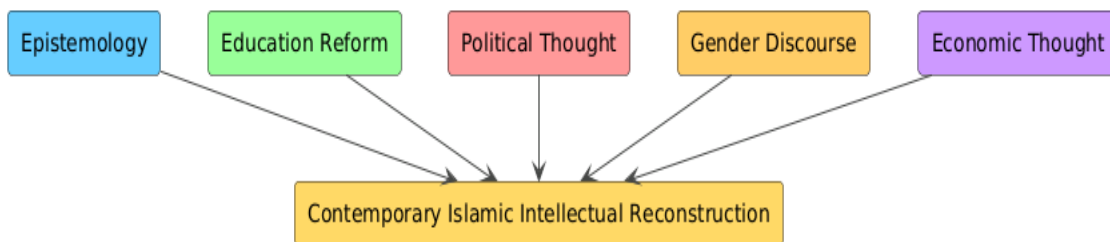
Gender and Social Justice in Contemporary Islamic Thought

Gender discourse represents another important dimension of contemporary Islamic intellectual reconstruction. Recent scholarship emphasizes the need to reinterpret Islamic sources in ways that promote gender equality and women's participation in leadership roles within Muslim societies (Munir et al., 2024).

Many studies argue that classical interpretations of Islamic law often reflected historical social structures rather than immutable theological principles. By revisiting these interpretations through contextual methodologies, contemporary scholars aim to develop more inclusive understandings of gender roles in Islam.

These debates also intersect with broader discussions on human rights, social justice, and ethical governance. As a result, gender discourse has become an integral part of contemporary Islamic intellectual renewal.

Figure 3. Dimensions of Contemporary Islamic Intellectual Thought



The diagram summarizes the major dimensions of contemporary Islamic intellectual reconstruction identified in this literature review. Each dimension—epistemology, education, politics, gender discourse, and economics—represents a distinct yet interconnected field of scholarly inquiry. Together, these domains form a comprehensive framework for understanding how Islamic intellectual traditions are being reinterpreted in response to modern challenges.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this literature review demonstrate that the reconstruction of contemporary Islamic intellectual thought has developed into a multidimensional discourse that extends beyond purely theological concerns. Recent scholarship highlights several key themes shaping this intellectual transformation, including the reform of Islamic epistemology, the revitalization of contextual *ijtihad*, the modernization of Islamic education, the reinterpretation of political and civilizational concepts, the promotion of gender equality, and the development of Islamic economic thought. These themes illustrate that contemporary Muslim scholars are actively engaging with modern challenges while maintaining continuity with classical Islamic intellectual traditions. Rather than rejecting tradition, the reconstruction process seeks to reinterpret foundational Islamic principles through contextual methodologies that respond to the realities of modern society.

Furthermore, the literature indicates that contemporary Islamic intellectual discourse is characterized by diversity and dynamism, reflecting the pluralistic contexts in which Muslim communities operate. Scholars increasingly emphasize interdisciplinary approaches that integrate religious knowledge with social sciences, philosophy, and modern scientific perspectives. Educational reform, institutional transformation, and contextual hermeneutics are frequently identified as key mechanisms for implementing intellectual renewal in practice. Despite these developments, ongoing challenges remain, particularly in balancing tradition with modernity, addressing digital-era transformations,

and fostering inclusive interpretations that support social justice and democratic values. Consequently, future research should continue exploring comparative perspectives, empirical case studies, and interdisciplinary frameworks in order to further advance the reconstruction of Islamic intellectual thought in the twenty-first century.

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