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Islamic Social Sciences Methodology: An Integrated Framework

Habib Ahmed *

Department of Islamic Banking (Honorary Professor), University of Jordan, Jordan, Durham University Business School, Durham University, United Kingdom.

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* *Corresponding author:*
habib.ahmed@durham.ac.uk

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Abstract

Objectives: The paper aims to develop an integrated methodological framework for Islamic social sciences by combining elements from Islamic methodologies and legacies with Western theoretical concepts and empirical methods to produce beneficial knowledge.

Methods: The paper is a conceptual research that builds an Islamic social science methodology by integrating the methodological concepts and methods from both Islamic discourses and Western scientific approaches. After presenting the foundational principles based on the existing literature, the paper develops a five-phase integrated methodological framework for Islamic social sciences.

Results: The Islamic social science methodological framework constitutes five phases. First, idea generation and selection of research topic. Second, developing a normative theory by using the values and principles of Sharia, heritage and relevant concepts from Western theoretical constructs. Third, the theoretical inferences are tested against the practice using qualitative, quantitative and mixed scientific methods of collecting and analysing data and information. Fourth, identifying the gaps between theory and practice. Finally, using an iterative process to reduce the divergences by reframing the theoretical constructs and/or changing the practices by applying suitable policies.

Conclusions: The knowledge produced by Islamic social science methodology should be beneficial to help build moral societies and enhance human welfare. The integrated methodology uses revelation and reason to carry out normative and positive analyses iteratively to produce beneficial Islamic social science knowledge. Knowledge creation must also be a dynamic 'becoming process' and evolve as the social realities, structures, and problems change over time.

Keywords: Islamic social sciences; Islamic methodologies and theories; Islamic history and legacy; scientific theory; scientific empirical analysis.

إطار منهجي متكامل للعلوم الاجتماعية الإسلامية

حبيب أحمد*

كلية إدارة الأعمال بجامعة دورهام، جامعة دورهام، المملكة المتحدة قسم المصارف الإسلامية، الجامعة الأردنية، الأردن.

ملخّص

الأهداف: تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى تطوير منهجية متكاملة للعلوم الاجتماعية الإسلامية، وذلك من خلال الجمع بين عناصر من المنهجيات الإسلامية مع المفاهيم النظرية والتجريبية الغربية، من أجل إنتاج معرفة مفيدة.

المنهجية: تقدم هذه الورقة بحثا مفهوميا يهدف إلى بناء منهجية إسلامية للعلوم الاجتماعية، وذلك من خلال الدمج بين المفاهيم المنهجية الإسلامية وبين المفاهيم العلمية الغربية. بعد أن تعرض الورقة المبادئ الأساسية، وذلك بناءً على الأبحاث والأدبيات القائمة، تقوم الورقة بتطوير منهجية متكاملة للعلوم الإسلامية مكونة من خمس مراحل.

النتائج: يتكون الإطار المنهجي للعلوم الإسلامية من خمس مراحل: أولا: توليد الفكرة واختيار الموضوع البحثي. ثانيا: تطوير نظرية معيارية من خلال القيم والمبادئ الشرعية، بالإضافة للمفاهيم النظرية الغربية ذات الصلة. ثالثا: اختبار الاستنتاجات النظرية وذلك بمقارنتها بالممارسة العملية، باستخدام الأدوات العلمية لجمع وتحليل البيانات والمعلومات. رابعا: تحديد وملاحظة الفجوات بين النظرية والتطبيق. أخيرا: استخدام عملية تكرارية لتقليل الاختلافات—بين النظرية والتطبيق—وذلك من خلال إعادة صياغة المفاهيم النظرية، و/أو تغيير الممارسة العملية من خلال تطبيق سياسات مناسبة.

الخلاصة: إن المعرفة التي تنتجها المنهجية الإسلامية للعلوم الاجتماعية لا بد أن تكون مفيدة لبناء مجتمعات أخلاقية، وتعزيز رفاهية الإنسان. إن المنهجية المتكاملة تستخدم الوحي والعقل لإجراء تحليل معياري، بشكل تكراري، لإنتاج معرفة مفيدة في مجال العلوم الاجتماعية الإسلامية. ولا بد أن يكون إنتاج المعرفة "عملية صيرورة" ديناميكية، وأن يتطور مع تغير الحقائق الاجتماعية والهياكل والمشكلات بمرور الزمن.

الكلمات الدالة: العلوم الاجتماعية الإسلامية، المنهجيات والنظريات الإسلامية، التاريخ والتراث الإسلامي، النظرية العلمية، التحليل العلمي التجريبي.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary Islamic social sciences face a couple of methodological predicaments arising from historical experiences and epistemological developments in the Islamic and Western worlds. First, historically, the Muslim world had a rich legal methodological framework and scholarship and was also a pioneer in producing scientific knowledge in fields such as astronomy, mathematics, optics, and medicine in its Golden Age (Faruqi, 2009; Huff, 1996, p. 308; Saliba, 2007). However, the development of new knowledge in both legal and Islamic sciences began to stagnate in the Middle Ages. While the derivation of new legal rulings stopped by the end of the eleventh century CE (AbuSulayman, 1993, p. 92), Islamic sciences started to become dormant in the 13th century CE (Huff, 1996, p. 309). This resulted in a dearth of innovations in the methodologies to produce Islamic legal rulings and new scientific knowledge.

Second, during the period when knowledge production in the Muslim world was stagnant, the scientific knowledge in the West developed significantly shaped by the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. While the Renaissance minimised the role of the Church in public spheres, the Enlightenment brought forth rationality as the guiding force of creating knowledge (Çolak and Mumcu, 2023). The result was a secular and positivist perspective towards knowledge creation, lacking moral and ethical considerations. Starting with modernity, which emphasised positivism and objectivity, the Western discourse on knowledge evolved into other forms of subjective post-modernist methodologies and theoretical approaches, such as constructivism and interpretivism (Moon and Blackman, 2014).

Muslim countries adopted the Western educational systems and associated knowledge structures as independent states in the 20th century CE due to colonial legacies and/or imitation. Since Islamic scholarship lacked appropriate methodological tools to study social sciences, Muslim scholars had different perspectives on the adoption of Western knowledge founded on secular/rational ontologies/epistemologies. Some modernist scholars, such as Jalaluddin Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Fazlur Rahman, took a liberal view and considered Western scientific knowledge to be acceptable (Furlow, 1996, p. 260; Ghamari-Tabrizi, 1996, pp. 321-322). A few others, such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, adopted a more traditional view, rejecting Western knowledge and proposing the development of Islamic sciences founded on the principles and values of Islam (Nasr, 1994; Stenberg, 1996). Some other scholars attempted to provide alternative approaches for the development of Islamic scientific knowledge that integrate the methodologies from both Islamic and Western traditions to varying degrees.

A key initiative was taken to develop frameworks on contemporary Islamic scientific knowledge under the banner of 'Islamization of knowledge' (IOK) by scholars such as Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Taha al-Alwani and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (Ragab, 1999; Stenberg, 1996; Zacky and Moniruzzam, 2024). Among the approaches to Islamizing knowledge, the IOK spearheaded by the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) under the leadership of Ismail al-Faruqi received significant traction. Al-Faruqi's paper entitled *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (first published as Al-Faruqi, 1982 and later edition as IIIT, 1989) provided various epistemological and ethical principles that would guide the Islamization of knowledge in different fields. Specifically, the document presented five principles of the proposed Islamic methodology and identified eight additional epistemological principles and five ethical principles that would guide the process of Islamization (IIIT, 1989). The study also included a work plan that outlined the steps needed to implement the scheme, which includes publishing university textbooks that entail Islamized knowledge.

Since the publication of Al-Faruqi's paper, different scholars have provided various perspectives on the IOK initiative and have critically examined different elements of the framework (AbuSulayman, 1993; Haneef, 2011). The contributions to IOK have been criticised for discussing the general framework for developing Islamic sciences without providing specific details on methodological issues (Arif, 1987, p. 66; Haneef, 2011, p. 81). After doing a thorough review of the literature on the methodological issues related to the theme of IOK, Safi (1993, p. 41) concludes that 'Islamization of knowledge project is still in its pre-methodological stage'. Haneef (2011), writing on the Islamization project more than a decade after Safi, confirms that the methodological part of IOK remained undeveloped. He asserts that the philosophical and methodological issues of the modern disciplines that are being tried to Islamize have not been discussed and understood. Haneef (2011)

points out that the lack of output and textbooks on Islamic social sciences was due to a lack of specific methodology on which the disciplines could be developed.

Given the above, this paper contributes to the methodological framework for Islamic social sciences. To do so, the paper takes a clue from Safi (1993, p. 42), who asserts that '…there can be no hope for escaping the pre-methodological state of contemporary Muslim scholarship without having a serious and profound encounter with the methodological approaches generated in both traditional Muslim and modern Western scholarship.' The paper develops a methodological framework for Islamic social sciences by integrating both Islamic and Western knowledge tools and methods. This is done by examining the philosophical foundations and using the appropriate methodological tools from both sources to develop new Islamic social science knowledge. The paper asserts that the integrated methodological approach aligns with the practices of past scholars and the Islamic heritage of creating new scientific knowledge.

Unlike the modernist or traditional perspectives of contemporary Muslim scholars, the integrated framework presented in this paper is based on sources of knowledge and methodological approaches from both the Islamic epistemological traditions and Western scientific approaches. While there have been some attempts to introduce scientific methods in Islamic legal studies, such as al-Sahib and Hamasha (2021) and Jaber (2021), the contributions to Islamic social sciences are scant. In doing so, some key issues related to the role of revelation and reason and the use of normative and positive approaches are also discussed in the proposed Islamic methodological framework. The integrated Islamic social science methodology presents a framework that can be used to produce beneficial knowledge reflecting Islamic values and principles, which can advance human welfare and shape social institutions in Muslim societies. Beyond adding to an under-researched area, the paper contributes to the growing literature on decolonising knowledge and epistemologies, which is becoming an important issue in academic circles globally (e.g., see Reiter, 2020).

The paper is organised as follows. While Section 2 discusses the philosophical foundations of Western and Islamic social sciences, Section 3 presents the building blocks of Islamic social science methodology. Section 4 outlines the foundational principles of Islamic epistemology and develops the framework of Islamic social science methodology. The last section concludes the paper.

2. Philosophical Foundations of Western Social Sciences and Islamic Studies Methodologies

Methodology is defined as the 'theory of how research should be undertaken, including the theoretical and philosophical assumptions upon which research is based and the implications of these for the method or methods adopted' (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 595). In other words, methodology is the 'worldview through which the research is designed and conducted' and includes the socio-cultural position, the theoretical and conceptual frame, and the methods used (Walter 2013, p. 12). The definitions of methodology indicate that it is different from methods. While the former provides the philosophical and conceptual framework of research, the latter refers to specific techniques and procedures for collecting and analysing data and information (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 3). The philosophical foundations of the Western and Islamic sciences are presented below.

2.1. Western Philosophical Foundations and Scientific Methodologies

Science is broadly classified as natural and social. The goal of scientific research is to build knowledge in the form of laws and theories that can explain natural or social phenomena. Natural science examines naturally occurring objects and phenomena as studied in the disciplines of physics, chemistry, biology, etc. Social science is 'the science of people or collections of people, such as groups, firms, societies, or economies, and their individual or collective behaviors' (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p. 1). Disciplines in social sciences include anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, sociology, etc. Given the dynamics and fluidity of human actions and societies, social sciences are more ambiguous and complex.

Social research is the 'systematic study of society, the patterns in it and the processes that shape what people do' (Walter 2013, p. 4). It seeks to investigate and seek answers to questions arising in the social world by identifying, investigating, and seeking to understand social patterns and social meanings (Walter 2013, p. 9). The approach of social scientists towards

their subjects is based on the philosophical assumptions about the 'nature of the social world and the way in which it is investigated' (Burrell and Morgan 2019, p.1). The philosophical perspectives provide the framework for how reality is understood and how the related knowledge is created. Key elements of research philosophy include ontology, epistemology and axiology, which are briefly discussed below.

Ontology: Ontology relates to 'understandings of reality and the nature of being that inform our view of the world' (Walter, 2013, p. 17). It is concerned with how researchers can deal with different ideas and truth claims of reality (Moon and Blackman, 2014, p. 1170). While realism asserts that only one reality exists that can be understood by using appropriate scientific methods, relativism maintains the existence of multiple realities created by mental constructs and interpretations (Moon and Blackman, 2014, p. 1169). Since ontology involves the 'nature and structure of being' and describes the 'ultimate nature of things as they are', it is sometimes linked to metaphysics (Rawnsley, 1998, p. 2). However, in the secular Western scientific realm, there is no role for religion in explaining reality.

Epistemology: Epistemology relates to the theory of knowledge and is linked to the origin and structure of knowledge (Rawnsley, 1998, p. 3). It addresses the question of 'what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study' (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 112) and focuses on enquiries related to truth by identifying the criteria for classifying knowledge as 'true' and 'false' (Burrell and Morgan 2019, p.1). Epistemology also deals with the nature of human knowing, which can take the forms of believing, perceiving, inferring, reflecting, and constructing knowledge (Rawnsley, 1998, p. 3). Contemporary epistemological approaches include rationalism which maintains the primacy of reason in understanding truths, or empiricism, which focuses on observations and evidence as key to forming knowledge. In Western epistemological approaches, religious sources or metaphysical reasoning are not considered valid forms of deriving knowledge.

Axiology: Axiology is the 'theory of values that inform how we see the world and the value judgments we make within our research' (Walter 2013, p. 16). A contention in modern Western scientific approaches is that researchers should produce 'value-neutral' knowledge based on rationality and evidence. However, this perspective is challenged when it comes to social sciences, which study social phenomena that are influenced and shaped by cultural, moral and political values (Walter 2013, p. 16). Furthermore, ethics related to conducting research are important, and these include issues such as honesty, transparency, plagiarism, protecting personal data and information, etc.

2.2. Islamic Methodologies and Philosophical Foundations

Monotheistic belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*) is the foundation of Islamic knowledge (Husain, 1993). The *tawhidi* perspective of Islamic knowledge is reflected in the first five principles of Al-Faruqi's Islamization of knowledge: the unity of Allah (God), unity of creation, unity of truth, unity of knowledge, unity of life, and unity of humanity (IIIT, 1989). The notion of *tawhid*, signifying the oneness of Allah and His creation, provides the philosophical foundations of holistic Islamic knowledge. Thus, ontology, epistemology and axiology of Islamic knowledge are founded on the concept of *tawhid* as discussed below.

*Ontology***:** Islamic teachings maintain that Allah is the creator of the universe and humans. The unity of creation means that Allah created the cosmos and also established the laws or the *sunan* (patterns) of creation (IIIT, 1989, p. 36). The religious metaphysical dimension of reality is an integral aspect of the Islamic worldview, and reality is viewed as inextricably linking the material and spiritual dimensions (Davies, 1991, p. 234; Ragab, 1993, p. 14).

*Epistemology***:** The epistemology arises from the *tawhidi* paradigm of the unity of truth (IIIT, 1989, p.40). Allah is the Truth (*al Haqq*), knows the truth and informs humans of the truth through the revelation of the Quran and the manifestations of truth are explicated in the Prophetic traditions (Sunnah) (IIIT, 1989, p. 40). The *sunan* or laws of nature can be discovered by the sense organs and the use of reason and rationality. Thus, the sources of knowledge in Islamic epistemology are both the revelation and reality created by Allah, and the truths inherent in them are understood by reason. Thus, revelation and the spiritual origins of knowledge represent the key difference between Islamic knowledge and secular Western knowledge.

*Axiology***:** Islamic knowledge is embedded with ethics. The ethical features of Islamic knowledge are derived from specific normative injunctions appearing in the Sharia texts and also encapsulated in the moral teachings of the Sharia

objectives (*maqasid*) and legal maxims that advocate enhancing benefits (*maslahah*) and mitigating harms(*mafsadah*) as discussed below. Islamic ethical values of Sharia texts, along with *maqasid* and legal maxims, provide the axiological foundations for producing beneficial Islamic knowledge that can create moral societies and promote human welfare.

3. Islamic Social Science Methodology: Building blocks

Developing an integrated research methodology for Islamic social sciences would require incorporating elements from both Islamic studies and Western social sciences in terms of theoretical and empirical research approaches. While the Islamic component would require using Islamic methodologies and historical experiences, the social sciences part would use scientific methodologies that include empiricism. A key contention in determining the methodologies in Islamic social science is to decide what aspects of methodologies from Islamic studies and social sciences need to be applied. In this regard, there is a need to discuss the theoretical and empirical research approaches of both Islamic and Western domains (as shown in Figure 1) and decide what is included in the development of a methodology of Islamic social sciences. Before discussing the framework of an integrated Islamic social science methodology in the next section, the features of each of the elements are discussed below.

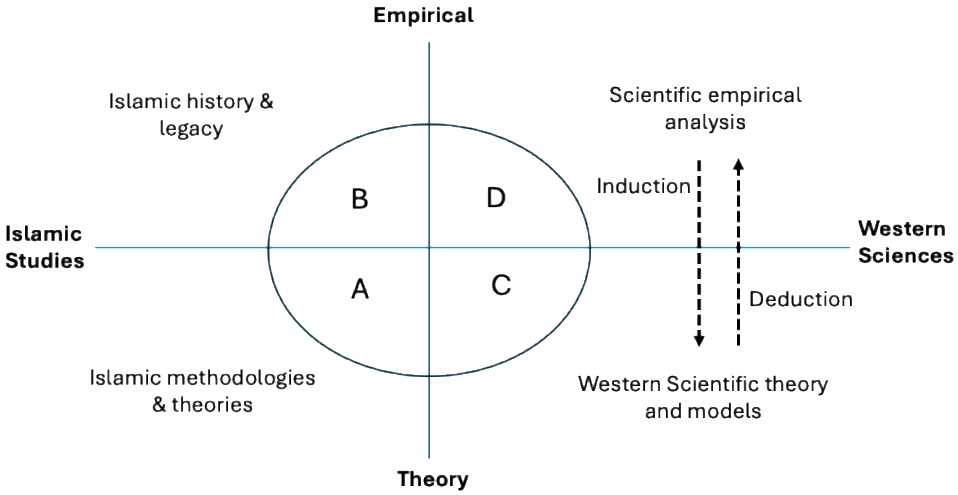


Figure 1: Knowledge Frameworks of Islamic Studies and Western Sciences

3.1. Islamic Methodologies and Theories

The foundational sources of Islamic knowledge are the Sharia texts of the Quran and Prophetic traditions (*Sunnah/hadith*), which provide legal principles and ethical values that govern human behaviour and socio-economic activities. While fundamental elements of Islamic teachings are given in the Sharia texts, laws and ethics can also be derived through the process of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) by using the tools of Islamic legal methodologies that link the new rulings to the Sharia texts. This is done by using hermeneutic principles of interpretation, reasoning and deduction (Masud, 1995, p. 20; Musa, 2014, p. 327). The three broad methodological frameworks used to derive new rulings include *usul al fiqh* (Islamic legal methodology), *qawaid al fiqh* (Islamic legal maxims) and *maqasid al Shariah* (objectives of Shariah) (Ahmed, 2025).

Usul al fiqh forms the dominant Islamic legal methodology of deriving rulings from Sharia texts by using principles of interpretation, reasoning and deduction (Masud 1995: 20, Musa 2014: 327). Various methods are used to derive laws, with the two common tools being consensus (*ijma*) and analogy (*qiyas*). While *ijma* (consensus) is the agreement of Islamic scholars on a particular matter, *qiyas* (analogy) links new rules to the revealed texts through analogical deductions. Beyond the agreed-upon methods of consensus (*ijma*) and analogy (*qiyas*), other methods used by different jurisprudential schools include juristic preference (*istihsan*), unrestricted interest *(maslaha mursalah*), consideration of public interest (*istislah*),

blocking the means (*saddudh dharae*), custom (*urf*) and presumption of continuity (*istishab*) (Hallaq, 2004; Kamali, 2003; Laldin, 2006).

Legal maxims (*qawaid al-fiqh*), derived from Sharia texts and reflecting the spirit or essence of Islamic law, form another important Islamic methodological tool (Dien, 2004, p. 3; Kamali, 2011). The maxims can be used as a guide in lawmaking as they embody universal rules that can be applied to particular cases (Rabb, 2010; Musa, 2014). While some maxims have legal connotations, others have ethical overtones. The principle of permissibility governing *muamalat* to which much of the social sciences belong is derived from maxims such as 'permissibility is the original rule of things' or 'the norm in transactions is that of permissibility' (Laldin et.al. 2013, p.10). This basic principle applied to economic and commercial activities implies that all acts are permissible unless they are prohibited by Sharia (Kamali, 2000, p. 66; Laldin et.al., 2013, p. 10). A maxim with ethical undertones includes 'the fundamental requirement in every contact is justice' (Laldin et al., 2013, p. 22). Maxims related to welfare (*maslaha*) and harm (*mafsada*) include 'averting harm takes precedence over achieving benefit' and 'harm is to be eliminated' (Laldin et al. 2013, pp. 110, 117).

Linked to the maxims of *maslaha* and *mafsada*, some scholars identify the underlying guiding principle governing Sharia as a whole to be 'enhance welfare (*maslaha*) and minimize harm (*mafsada*) (Dien, 2004, p.3; Heinrichs, 2002, p. 372, Kamali, 2008, pp. 32, 35). Sharia benefit (*maslaha*) is ranked according to three levels: the essentials (*daruriyyat*), the needs (*hajiyyat*) and the embellishments (*tahsiniyyat*). Whereas the essentials are things that are indispensable for people's lives and disregarding them would lead to disruption and chaos, the needs are interests that, when not met, cause hardships in the lives of the community members. Embellishments lead to further improvements and refinements that add value to life (Kamali, 2003, pp. 356-357).

Maqasid al Sharia (hereafter *maqasid*) represent the essential *maslaha* that can achieve the best interests of humans and promote good life (Ibn Ashur, 2006; Landin, 2020). Scholars identify the desired outcomes under *maqasid* as the protection and enhancement of faith, self, intellect, posterity, and wealth of all humans (Hallaq, 2004; Kamali, 2003; Laldin, 2020). The human-centric *maqasid* provide the normative wisdom of Sharia and are directly relevant to social sciences. Ibn Ashur (2006, p. 285) also identifies the *maqasid* specific to economic transactions and activities as marketability, transparency, preservation, durability and justice. Thus, beyond the ethical teachings of Sharia texts, the *maqasid* and maxims provide moral teachings that represent the axiological values of Islamic knowledge.

There are various implications of the Sharia principles, values and methodologies presented above for Islamic social sciences. Rahman (1995) maintains that the lessons from the early development of Sunnah imply that new forms of social institutions and structures can be formed that reflect the Islamic values of social justice. The Islamic methodological framework would strive to produce knowledge reflecting the key Quranic message of being 'mercy for mankind and the universe (*rahmatan lil alamin*)'(Quran, 21:107). Thus, an important ethical feature of Islamic knowledge is that it should be beneficial in terms of contributing to human welfare, as envisaged in various sayings of Prophet Muhamad (PBUH) (Kamali, 2003). There are numerous *hadith* on seeking beneficial knowledge and avoiding knowledge that is not beneficial (for relevant *hadith*, see Annex).

An appropriate methodological tool under *usul al fiqh* that is relevant for social sciences is custom (*urf*). Custom as one of the sources of rulings is also confirmed by one of the leading five legal maxims, which states that 'custom is an arbiter' (Laldin et al., 2013, p. 135). This is particularly relevant in matters of *muamalat*, which is governed by the principle of permissibility. The implication of using the method of *urf* is that customs and practices in different societies can be accepted as long as they do not contradict the Sharia principles and values. An example of *urf* during the time of the Prophet (PBUH) is the acceptance of the contractual form of *mudarabah*, which was practised before Islam and did not specifically appear in the Sharia texts (Laldin et al., 2013, p. 135).

An important message of Islam is that Sharia aims to create ethical societies. Ethics has different dimensions when applied to social sciences. At a personal level, it implies building moral character as confirmed by a *hadith* in which the Prophet (PBUH) says, "I was sent to perfect good character" (see Annex for *hadith*). Beyond religious obligations of worship (Islam) and belief in the articles of faith (*iman*), *ihsan* is an attempt at perfection attained by incorporating Islamic

morals and ethics in one's life (see *hadith* in Annex). Thus, for Muslims, religious practices are a 'becoming process' in which they strive to ascend from Islam to *iman* and, ultimately, to *ihsan*.

The laws or the *sunan* reveal the cause and effect of different phenomena and apply to 'material, the spatial, the biological, the psychic, the social, and the aesthetic realities all obey and fulfil these laws' (IIIT, 1989, p. 36). Other than numerous Quranic verses that allude to natural laws, the Quran presents several broad relationships of causality that also apply to social contexts. For example, the Quran (2:261) links giving charity to prosperity and states that wrongdoing leads to destruction (Quran, 18:59) (See Annex for the Quranic verses).

Islamic teachings maintain that Allah entrusted humans with the resources as trustees (*khalifa*), and they have the responsibility of utilising the resources for sound and beneficial purposes (Kamali, 2003). An implication of *khalifa* is that humans 'possess a divinely delegated power to civilize the earth [*ta'mir al-ard*], and they are commanded not to corrupt it' (El Fadl, 2015, p. 477). The role of stewardship of *khalifa* in Islamic teachings goes beyond humans and also covers other creations and the environment, as implied in the notion of *rahmatan lil alamin*. In their role as trustees and engaging with the resources, humans are expected to use rationality, scientific observations and experimental knowledge to enhance their welfare (Kamali, 2003).

3.2. Islamic Legacy and Empirical Analysis

The Islamic empirical perspective can be viewed as using appropriate methods to comprehend reality and positive truths accurately. At a fundamental level, Al-Alwani (1995, p. 85) argues that under the Quranic paradigm, there is a need to undertake two types of reading: first, reading the revelation, the Quran, which explains all the matters of religious significance, and second, reading the book of His creation, the natural universe. He asserts that reading one while neglecting the other would fail to create knowledge that benefits humanity or is relevant for building a civilised society. The link between understanding the knowledge of Allah's creations and the truth of the Quran is stated in verse (Quran 41: 53) which declares, 'We will show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this (Quran) is the truth.'

The use of evidence-based knowledge in worldly matters from an Islamic perspective can be discussed in different ways. The Sharia texts themselves provide historical and empirical narratives. The Quranic vision of history is a 'dynamic moral process', and the 'moral and ethical concepts and principles of the Quran inform a critical awareness of both change and continuity and how they should be operated in time and space' (Davies, 1991, p. 234). Evidence-based empirical knowledge is closely linked to rational knowledge, which is derived from 'ordinary sense perceptions' and is 'the result of reflection upon what one acquires through senses' (Namazi, 2017, p. 407). Kamali (2003) asserts that the Quran has numerous verses that invite people to think, reflect and contemplate and refer to obtaining knowledge through the senses of observing, speech, hearing, and intuition (for example, see Quran 22:46 and Quran 29:20 in the Annex).

The Quranic message was implemented by the Prophet (PBUH), and he differentiated between religious and worldly affairs and the acceptability of using reason in the latter. This is apparent from the *hadith* on grafting in which the Prophet (PBUH) acknowledged that technical knowledge should be used in worldly matters (see Annex for *hadith* on grafting). Similarly, it is reported that the Prophet (PBUH) acted on the advice of Salman al-Farsi when the latter referred to the practice in Persia and suggested digging a trench before the Battle of Khandaq (Ahmad, 2000, 35; Noor, 2023, p.94). These incidents confirm the basic principle of permissibility in *muamalat*, implying that in worldly matters, beneficial ideas and concepts can be adopted from sources not specified in the Sharia texts. In these cases, reason and rationality can be used, but their use should be guided by the ethical values of Sharia, enhancing welfare (*maslaha*) and minimising harm (*mafsada*).

Islamic scholars of the past followed this course and borrowed ideas from different civilisations to develop Islamic sciences. They used tools of logic and scientific concepts from the Greeks, Indians, Sasanian and other civilisations to make unparalleled advances in the development of early modern sciences during the Golden Age (Huff, 1996, p. 309; Saliba, 2007, p. 2). Examples of two key innovations that the Muslims adopted from other civilisations that had huge impacts on knowledge creation and its dissemination are the number system from India and paper from China. While embracing the

numerals from India and developing them to have decimals by Al-Khwarizmi, the Arabic numerals laid the foundations of modern mathematical sciences (Bernhard, 2020; Burnett, 2006). Similarly, Muslims adopted paper from China and developed it further by using different materials and better technology. The introduction of paper in the eighth century CE 'had a transformative effect on medieval Islamic civilisation, spurring an extraordinary burst of literary creativity in virtually all subjects, from theology to natural sciences and literature' (Bloom, 2001, p. 12).

The perspective of Muslims toward the empirical approaches was that the material world and the natural laws that governed it were studying Allah's creation. Muslim scholars used observations and experimentation to create knowledge in different natural sciences disciplines (Falagas, 2006). During the Golden Age, Muslims contributed to various scientific disciplines such as mechanics, logic, mathematics, astronomy, pharmacology and medicine (Islam, 2011; Saliba, 2007, p. 21). There were also empirical contributions to the humanities that included subject matters that required evidence-based validation, such as drawing maps in the field of geography (Renima et al., 2016).

Historically, the contributions towards social sciences research and methodologies in the Muslim world were relatively scant. This may be because the social structures were much simpler in the past, and there was no need to come up with novel forms of social science scholarship (Zahraa, 2003, p. 248). One of the exceptions is Ibn Khaldun, who presented a vivid discourse on the causes of the rise and fall of civilisations in the fourteenth century CE. Ibn Khaldun's approach was fundamentally empirical in essence, and he was critical of the way transmitted information was presented by historians without scrutiny and for assessing the truthfulness of events (Ibn Khaldun, 2015, pp. 75-76). He asserted that 'Prejudice and partisanship obscure the critical faculty and preclude critical investigation. The result is that falsehoods are accepted and transmitted' (Ibn Khaldun, 2015, p. 89). To present truthful accounts, the historian needs to be impartial and critically investigate the information so that 'its truth or untruth becomes clear' (p. 89). He further claimed that untruths are accepted as truths due to 'ignorance of how conditions conform with reality' and 'ignorance of the nature of the various conditions arising in civilization' (Ibn Khaldun, 2015, p. 90). Ibn Khaldun concluded that 'If the student knows the nature of events and the circumstances and requirements in the world of existence, it will help him to distinguish truth from untruth in investigating the historical information critically' (p. 90).

Though Ibn Khaldun did not explicitly discuss methodology, his scholarship provides a general framework for studying what can be called human or civilizational sciences (*ilm ul umram*). Ibn Khaldun (2015, pp. 559-600) states, 'It should be known that the storehouse of human science is the soul of man. In it God has implanted perception, enabling it to think and, thus, to acquire (scientific knowledge). (The process) starts with perception (*taṣawwur*) of the realities and is then continued by affirmation or negation of the essential attributes of the (realities), either directly or through an intermediary.' Lawrence (2015, p. 25) summarises Ibn Khaldun's approach to human social organisation, which became the pathway to his new science as 'demarcating Tradition from Event, while affirming both' where Tradition relates to the religion and Event involves real-world episode. The claims of Tradition are counterposed by Events, which were represented by 'evidence that can be proven or disproven by independent inquiry' (Lawrence, 2015, p. 20). Thus, the Islamic methodology for social sciences proposed by Ibn Khaldun emphasises examining and assessing both revelational truths and positive truths practised in reality.

3.3. Western Scientific Theory and Models

Scientific knowledge constitutes 'a generalized body of laws and theories to explain a phenomenon or behaviour of interest that are acquired using the scientific method' (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p. 2). While laws are 'observed patterns of phenomena or behaviours', theories are 'systematic explanations of the underlying phenomenon or behaviour' (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p. 2). Whereas theories are abstract formulations of natural or social concepts, relationships or phenomena, evidence is gathered by using empirical methods to test if these theoretical notions are true in reality. In other words, modern scientific methods use logic (theory) and evidence (observations) to arrive at scientific truths (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p. 3).

Scientific research approaches can be broadly classified as inductive or deductive based on the interactions of theory and evidence. Inductive research is referred to as 'theory-building research' whereby empirical data and observations are used to build theory. Deductive research is 'theory-testing research' in which the validity of the theoretical propositions is

tested by using empirical data (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p. 3). Advancement of science requires both theory building and theory testing, as theories may not have value if they cannot explain reality. Furthermore, testing theories (deduction) helps researchers identify which of the competing theories best explain a phenomenon, and this can improve existing theories.

Beyond the traditional deductive and inductive approaches, some scholars suggest using abductive approaches to develop new theories (Okoli, 2023). Abduction 'entails the central creative role of discovering the generative idea, hunch, or conjecture that, in subsequent stages, can be developed into a theory via logical deduction and tested through empirical induction' (Sætre and Van De Ven, 2021, p. 684). Abduction can resolve the anomalies that cannot be explained in research, and new ideas or hunches are used to resolve them. Peirce (1998) argues that pragmatism is the logic of abduction and views it as a process of introducing new ideas in forming explanatory hypotheses. He concludes that whereas 'deduction proves that something *must be*, induction shows that something *actually is* operative; abduction merely suggests that something *may be'* (Peirce, 1998, p. 216).

Various proposals of building theories for social sciences from Western scientific perspectives are proposed based on methodological approaches. For example, Dubin (1983) provides a deductive framework that starts with developing hypotheses based on theory, testing the hypotheses by collecting and analysing data and adjusting the theory based on the results. Lynham (2002) provides a more general framework in which theories can be developed by using multiple paradigms and using both deductive and inductive approaches. He identifies the stages of theory-building methodology as 'conceptual development, operationalization, confirmation, application, and continuous refinement and development of the theory' (Lynham, 2002, p. 22).

Theory building and interpretations of empirical results can be influenced by the philosophical perspectives discussed above. As indicated, reality can be viewed as one (realism) or multiple (relativism) under ontological perspectives, and the epistemological perspective can use objectivity or subjectivity to determine what is acceptable knowledge. Various theoretical frameworks are identified based on different philosophical perspectives and research approaches. These include positivism, structuralism, social constructivism and interpretivism (Moon and Blackman, 2014, p. 1169).

3.4. Scientific Empirical Analysis

An empirical research design starts with identifying the aims of the research and then developing a clear strategy that includes choosing the methods of collecting and analysing data to fulfil the objectives. Various research strategies can be used to conduct empirical research, such as experiments, surveys, case studies, action research, grounded theory, ethnography or archival research (Saunders et al., 2009). Depending on the type of research, a mono-method or multi-method can be used. The methods used depend on the research questions, which determine the types of data and information that have to be collected and the analytical methods that can be used.

Data can be qualitative and/or quantitative and can be collected from primary or secondary sources. The methods used in primary data collection include observation, semi-structured interviews or questionnaires (Saunders et al., 2009). The methods used to analyse data can be quantitative, qualitative or mixed depending on whether the data is qualitative or quantitative. For example, while content analysis and hermeneutic analysis can be used for qualitative data, various descriptive and inferential analyses can be carried out with quantitative data. The inferential analyses used for quantitative data include regression, factor analysis, logistic and probit regression, time series analysis, etc. (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

4. Integrated Islamic Social Science Methodology: Principles and Framework

As indicated, the traditional Islamic methodologies of *usul al-fiqh* are used for deriving legal rulings and are considered a part of the legal system (Rahman, 1995, pp. 184-85). Unlike legal rulings, social sciences study the realities of social structures that are constructed by human actors in different societies. Though some elements of social behaviour and construction may have legal connotations, the bulk of these are about how people interact with each other in social settings and structures based on their values, norms and purposes. Thus, a key characteristic of social sciences is to examine the social realities empirically. Thus, *usul al-fiqh* methodology may not be useful in carrying out scientific research that relates to using evidence from social practices to understand social phenomena (AbuSulayman, 1993; Haneef, 2011, p. 83; Zahraa, 2003, p. 245).

Given the above, this section presents an integrated methodological framework for Islamic social sciences. This is done by first presenting the foundational epistemological principles based on the discussions presented in the previous sections and then discussing elements of the integrated methodological framework.

4.1. Foundational Epistemological Principles

1). Defining Knowledge (ilm)

The first step to creating knowledge for Islamic social sciences is to define it. Traditionally, knowledge (*ilm*) has been defined in various ways by different scholars. Rosenthal (1970) presents 87 different definitions of *ilm* by past scholars (see Annex for a sample of definitions of *ilm* in Rosenthal, 1970). A definition derived by amalgamating these definitions can be stated as '*ilm* is the cognition, explanation, comprehension and firm belief of things and objects as they are in their realities and actualities without mistakes or errors'. A few key points arise from this definition of knowledge. First, knowledge is about knowing 'things and/or objects.' Second, it relates to their 'realities and actualities'. Finally, knowledge should be 'correct or truthful without errors.' The way the concept of *ilm* is conceived in the definition implies that true knowledge is essentially linked to evidence related to reality.

2). Sharia Objectives

As indicated, the universal objective of Sharia is to enhance human welfare (*maslaha*) and prevent harm (*mafsada*). *Maslaha* is ranked as the essentials (*daruriyyat*), the needs (*hajiyyat*) and the embellishments (*tahsiniyyat*). The essential objectives of *maslaha* are represented by the *maqasid*, which entail protecting and enhancing the faith, self, intellect, posterity, and wealth of all humans (Hallaq, 2004; Kamali, 2003; Laldin, 2020). Thus, the objectives of Islamic social sciences would be to achieve the Sharia objectives for all individuals in the society by meeting the essential *maslaha* (*maqasid*) and then moving on to meeting their needs (*hajiyyat*) and the embellishments (*tahsiniyyat*).

3). Beneficial Knowledge

In line with the Sharia objectives, knowledge from an Islamic perspective should be beneficial and advance human welfare (Kamali 2003). This would imply that knowledge in Islamic social sciences must be harmonious with the relevant Sharia texts and also the ethics of *maqasid* and the legal maxims. The goal of Islamic social sciences should be to align the social reality with Sharia principles and values to enhance societal welfare. Assessing whether knowledge is beneficial would require empirically evaluating the social realities in terms of the achievement of welfare in line with Sharia objectives and values.

4). Approaches to Religious and Worldly Matters

There is a need to distinguish the approaches used in religious affairs (*ibadat*) and worldly matters (*muamalat*). While there are certain guidelines in the Sharia texts on specific social issues, such as the inheritance laws and rights of individuals within families, the principle of permissibility applies in *muamalat* where Sharia is silent. Accordingly, the customs of people (*urf*) in society can be accepted to be Sharia-compatible if they do not contradict the principles and values of Sharia texts. The implication is that the concepts and methods of Western sciences that are not contrary to Islamic principles and values can be used in Islamic social sciences. Thus, it is permissible to adopt concepts and practices not explicitly mentioned in the Sharia texts in Islamic social science theory building and using empirical tools and methods. However, ethical teachings of Sharia, *maqasid* and maxims provide axiological values of Islam, and these must be applied to ensure the ethical nature of Islamic social sciences.

5). Sources of Knowledge: The Text and The World

Both the revelation and the practices in the real world provide information and data that are used to create knowledge in Islamic social sciences. Al-Alwani (1995, p. 88) claims that reading the revelation without reading the real world leads to mysticism, and reading the world without revelation produces positivism that excludes the axiological verities and has no moral foundations. Thus, both the Sharia texts and the social realities are sources of knowledge on which Islamic social sciences should be built.

6). Role of Reason and Rationality

The Islamic concept of knowledge encompasses transcendental knowledge as well as knowledge that is based on sense perception and observation (Kamali, 2003). Specifically, the development of Islamic social theories would require using reason and rationality to both understand the revelational texts and also interpret the social practices. However, there is a need to specify the spheres where revelation and reason can be used and how they relate to each other (AbuSulayman, 1985; Safi, 1993, p. 31).

7). Certitude and Conjectural Knowledge

Islamic epistemology distinguishes knowledge that is conjectural (*zann*) and that which has certitude (*yaqin*) (Kamali 2003). In religious and legal matters, the notions of conjecture and certitude are understood as the affinity of derived rulings to Sharia texts. In the case of social sciences, the certitude will be related to the extent to which the derived theories entail the axiological or ethical values of Sharia. This can be called 'revelational certitude'. The implications of conjecture and certitude will have an additional dimension in *muamalat,* which studies social realities. In social sciences, conjecture and certainty would also relate to the extent to which knowledge represents reality truthfully and with high probabilities. This can be called scientific or 'empirical certitude'. Thus, developing truthful knowledge in social sciences would require both revelational and empirical certitudes.

8). Human Agency and Becoming Process

Arguing that the Quran is an action-oriented book, Rahman (1988, p. 11) asserts that knowledge is something that can be used to act upon and change events for a better world. At a personal level, the notion of *khalifa* is important when discussing the role of humans in socio-economic-political contexts. As mentioned, *khalifa* will be guided by the Sharia values and principles and act to civilise the earth and prevent corrupting it (El Fadl, 2015, p. 477). This implies that an Islamic society will attempt to contribute to enhancing *maslaha* and minimise *mafsada.* The aim of individuals and an Islamic society would be to achieve the elements of essential *maslaha* (*maqasid*) and then progress to meeting needs (*hajiyyat*) and embellishments (*tahsiniyyat*). For example, for the *maqsad* of religion, Muslims should strive to progress from Islam to *iman*, and then *ihsan*. Thus, the social norms and practices of Muslim societies and individuals would be a continuous 'becoming process' as they endeavour to achieve moral excellence and enhance human welfare.

4.2 Islamic Social Sciences Methodology: A Framework

Given the definition of foundational epistemological principles, Islamic social sciences can be defined as the 'study of social norms and practices aiming to create beneficial knowledge compatible with Islamic principles and values that promote the well-being of all creations (*rahmatan lil alamin*) for contemporary and future generations.' Islamic social sciences methodologies would produce beneficial knowledge that combines revelational principles and values with the positive truth practised in real life by using reason. In terms of Figure 1, the integrated methodology for developing Islamic social sciences would entail elements from Islamic/Western theoretical/empirical sources as shown by A, B, C and D. The integrated Islamic methodological framework for Islamic social sciences is shown in Figure 2. The relevant components (i.e., A, B, C and D) that form a part of an integrated methodological framework must be harmonious with Sharia values and principles and compatible with the foundational principles discussed above.

As indicated, the basic rule governing methodologies in Islamic social sciences is the principle of permissibility, which implies that Western social sciences knowledge and methods can be used as long as they do not contradict Sharia principles and values. While Western value-laden knowledge that is contrary to Islamic values cannot be used in Islamic social sciences, knowledge with values that do not contradict Islamic principles can be adapted. An example of the former includes adopting a monetary theory that entails interest rates as a policy tool, and examples of the latter are the sustainable development goals of poverty reduction and ending hunger as policy objectives.

Similarly, while some aspects of the scientific methodologies may be value-neutral from Islamic perspectives, in other cases, they may be inconsistent with Islamic values. For example, the epistemological framework of the Western scientific approach that has no place for religion is contradictory to Islamic epistemology and cannot be accepted. However, most of the research methods used to collect and analyse data can be considered Sharia-neutral and used in Islamic social sciences.

In terms of research approaches used to develop knowledge, elements of inductive theories developed by investigating social realities empirically may be accepted, whereas some of the deductive theories based on pure rationality may be rejected. This is because inductively generated theories represent the positive truths of reality, but the latter may be conjectural. For example, behavioural theories based on experiments may be acceptable, but deductive theories defining the rational behaviour of individuals as self-seeking utility or profit maximisers cannot be accepted.

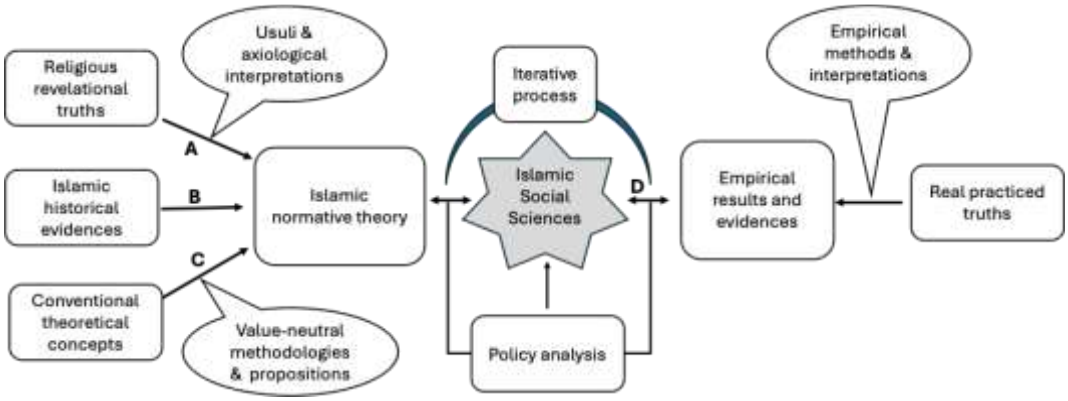


Figure 2: Methodological/Conceptual Framework of Islamic Social Science

The framework of integrated Islamic social science methodology is shown in Figure 2, and its different phases are discussed below.

1). Idea generation: Identify the social phenomena of interest

The first element in any social science research is to identify the social phenomenon that is being investigated. This important step relates to idea generation and exploring what research questions need to be addressed. Idea generation is a rational endeavour as it involves pondering on social issues and selecting the subject matter of the research. This may require having a sound understanding of reality, the social structures and the environment. An important part of identifying the social phenomenon for research is to carry out a thorough review of the relevant literature on the topic. The implication of ethicality in this phase of Islamic social science methodology is that the ideas chosen for research should be able to produce beneficial knowledge in terms of building moral societies and/or advancing human welfare.

2). Develop a normative theoretical model

Once the topic of the research is identified, the next phase is to develop a Sharia-compatible normative theory that outlines 'what ought to be' related to the social phenomenon under study. This is done by exploring the concepts and notions related to the social phenomena from three broad categories of sources: Religious revelational truths, Islamic historical experiences and Sharia-neutral Western theoretical concepts (corresponding to A, B, and C in Figures 1 and 2).

Using the revelational truths and values of Sharia related to social phenomena is a key aspect of developing Islamic social theory (A in Figure 2). Other than specific concepts related to the social phenomenon in the Sharia texts, such as the *sunan* related to social and economic affairs, *maqasid al Sharia* and maxims (*qawaid al fiqh*) are considered additional sources of ethical principles that can be used in theory-building. Islamic social science theory will also use the relevant practices from Islamic history and legacy that can support the theoretical framework (B in Figure 2). This would require examining how scholars of the past dealt with issues related to the social phenomenon being studied. Finally, notions from the Western social sciences that are Sharia-neutral can be applied to support building Islamic normative theory (C in Figure 2). For example, building a theoretical model for Islamic banking can use concepts from conventional finance, such as balance sheet, governance, risk management, liquidity management, etc. Furthermore, the conventional Sharia-neutral theoretical concepts derived from inductive approaches that are based on evidence representing reality can also be used in Islamic social science theory-making.

A couple of things related to the Islamic normative theoretical modelling must be noted. Theory building in Islamic social sciences will involve using reason and rationality, as the social problem that is being studied may not have explicit mention in the Sharia texts. Specifically, rationality has to be used to develop the theoretical model as it would require interpreting the Sharia principles and values, the Islamic history and legacy and Sharia-neutral Western concepts and methods that are relevant to the social phenomenon being studied. Second, there are differences in theory-building in Islamic social sciences and Western methodological approaches. Whereas the deductive approach assumes theories based on pure rationality and inductive theory building is based on empirical evidence, normative theory building in Islamic social sciences is more comprehensive as it combines revelational, historical and Sharia-neutral positive truths. Using revelational truths and values of Sharia related to the social phenomena to develop Islamic social theory is unique to Islamic sciences, as this does not exist in Western scientific methodologies.

3). Empirical testing to determine practice and positive truths

An initial step for the empirical part of Islamic social science methodology is to develop hypotheses from the normative theory and collect appropriate data and information to test their validity (D in Figure 2). In this regard, the scientific methods of data collection and analysis used in Western social sciences can be applied as these are deemed value-neutral techniques. The results from the empirical analysis represent the positive truths or '*what is'* practised in reality. While the technical methods may be value-neutral, the results need to be interpreted with caution since there are limits to empirical work. For example, some behavioural and ethical issues may be difficult to measure (Saunders et al., 2009). Since the results would require interpretation, there is a need to analyse the results objectively in light of the normative theoretical assertions/hypotheses. Minimising subjectivity in interpretations of results will improve the certitude of positive truths.

In line with the Islamic normative theory that entails Islamic axiological values, one of the objectives of the empirical exercise in Islamic social sciences is to ascertain the status of the social phenomenon in terms of the hierarchy of *maslaha* (i.e., *daruriyat, hajjiyat, tahsiniyyat*) and *maqasid*. This relates to the beneficial features of knowledge and is necessary to understand and assess the levels of ethicality of practices in Islamic societies.

4). Gap analysis: Normative theory vs. positive truths

The next phase in Islamic social science methodology is to carry out a gap analysis between the empirical results and normative theoretical propositions. In this regard, two broad types of cases can arise. First, the evidence from positive truths is generally consistent with the conclusions of the normative theory. In this case, the results would indicate the status of the social phenomenon with regard to the hierarchies of *maslaha* (i.e., *daruriyat, hajjiyat, tahsiniyyat*). Second, empirical results show a gap between the practice and normative theoretical assertions. In such cases, there will be a need to understand the factors that create the disparities between normative theoretical assertions and positive truths.

5). Iteration and the Becoming Process

The final phase of Islamic social science methodology is forward-looking and sets the direction for further research and development. In cases where the normative theoretical assertions and empirical evidence are in harmony, but the *maslaha* status has not reached the highest ranks (i.e., *daruriyat, hajjiyat, tahsiniyyat*), there will be a need to propose ways in which the status can be progressed to the higher levels. In cases where the gaps between theory and practice exist, the disparities need to be resolved, which can be done in two ways. First, there may be a need to go back to the theoretical framework and examine if the theory is unrealistic and needs reframing. Recognising that normative theory building is an interpretive exercise, a search for other alternative Sharia-compatible theoretical models can be sought. In this regard, the abductive approach can be used by thinking of new ideas in theory building to resolve the anomalies in research findings.

The second way to deal with the disparity between theory and evidence is to try to change the practice to one that is more compatible with the normative theoretical conclusions. This will require policy research through which appropriate policies can be developed to transform practices to achieve the normative goals. This can be done by understanding the underlying dynamics of reality and developing a suitable 'theory of change' to propose appropriate policies. An appropriate theory of change will be able to identify the policy instruments and mechanisms that can help achieve the normative goals. The iterative process of refining the theory and/or improving the practice signifies the 'becoming process', which represents

continuous efforts to produce beneficial Islamic social sciences knowledge.

It should be noted that it is not expected that each individual Islamic social scientist will carry out all the phases of the Islamic social science methodology indicated above. It is likely that researchers will focus on different phases of the research methodology framework. For example, while some researchers would aim to build normative theories, others may carry out empirical research, and some other researchers may work on policy-oriented research. However, an imbalance in some phases of the research may lead to weak development of Islamic social sciences. For example, carrying out empirical research without normative theoretical foundations may lead to the production of knowledge that lacks Islamic values and may not be beneficial. In all cases, however, the idea-generation phase is important as it provides a proper perspective and direction of the study and also determines novelty and the key contributions of any research.

5. Conclusion

There have been calls to develop Islamic social science methodologies as the traditional Islamic legal methodology is not suitable to deal with contemporary social sciences. The paper is an attempt to fill the gap and contribute to the literature on Islamic social science methodologies. The integrated methodological framework for Islamic social sciences combines elements of Islamic epistemology and heritage and scientific theoretical concepts and empirical methods. While the traditional Islamic methodology of *usul al fiqh* focuses on deriving legal rulings from the Sharia texts, the methodology for Islamic social sciences uses the values and principles of revelation, the heritage and relevant concepts from Western theoretical constructs to develop the normative social science theory.

As indicated in the introduction, contemporary scholars have different perspectives on the methodological approaches that can be used for social sciences. On the one hand, the traditionalists reject contemporary Western knowledge and methods and focus on Sharia texts and legacy (i.e., focus on A and B only in Figures 1 and 2). On the other hand, the modernists adopt Western knowledge by ignoring most Islamic knowledge sources and heritage (focusing on C and D only in Figures 1 and 2). The discussions presented in this paper demonstrate that rejecting one or more of the sources of knowledge from either Islamic or Western knowledge sources and methods is contrary to the Islamic traditions of openness in creating new knowledge, as envisaged in Sharia mentalities and practices of past scholars. This paper develops a methodological framework for Islamic social sciences that uses an integrated approach that combines Islamic and Western knowledge tools and methods (shown by A, B, C. and D in Figures 1 and 2). This integrated approach to developing new knowledge aligns with the Islamic heritage of creating scientific knowledge.

The paper presents five key phases of the methodological framework to create new knowledge of Islamic social sciences: idea generation and selection of research topic; developing a normative theory; testing the theoretical inferences against the practice empirically; identifying the gaps between theory and practice; and using an iterative process to reduce the divergences by reframing the theoretical constructs and/or changing the practices by applying suitable policies. The methodological framework highlights a few distinctive features of Islamic social sciences relative to Western scientific methodology. First, whereas the focus of the latter is on positivism, the former has both normative and positive elements. The implication is that whereas Western social sciences exclude ethics in their analyses, Islamic social sciences are embedded with ethics. Second, Western social sciences use rationality to develop knowledge, while Islamic social sciences use both revelation and reason to create knowledge. Reason and rationality are used in both developing the normative theories and carrying out the empirical work, but these are guided by Sharia principles and ethical values. Finally, conventional social sciences are usually studied as mono-disciplinary subject matters, such as economics, sociology, politics, management, etc. Islamic social sciences are, in essence, multidisciplinary as they require understanding the social phenomena in light of Sharia texts, Islamic legacy and practices in reality.

As asserted by Haneef (2011), the scant Islamic scientific knowledge produced during contemporary times is partly due to the lack of development of appropriate methodologies. The integrated methodology presented in this paper provides a framework that can be used for the development of Islamic social sciences. However, implementing the integrated methodological framework to create new Islamic social science knowledge and develop curricula will be challenging. Being

comprehensive and multidisciplinary, it would not only require knowledge of various subjects such as the social phenomena, Sharia texts and Islamic legacy, but it would also involve applying different types of research approaches such as theory building, empirical testing and policy development. Given the dominance of using Western methodologies in social sciences and Islamic methodologies in Islamic studies, the transition to the integrated methodological framework will be challenging and require scholars to work collaboratively on different phases of the integrated Islamic methodology to develop novel and useful social sciences knowledge.

The development of various disciplines of contemporary Islamic social sciences is at different levels. While some Islamic disciplines, such as economics, finance and accounting, have made significant progress, other disciplines, such as politics, sociology and psychology, are relatively less developed. Within the relatively developed disciplines, however, different phases of the Islamic social sciences methodology identified in this paper have developed unevenly. For example, whereas empirical research in Islamic finance has been extensive, the theoretical and policy-oriented research in the discipline has been relatively limited. This imbalance can lead to the production of knowledge that has weak ethical foundations and, as such, is not beneficial from an Islamic axiological perspective. Thus, there will be a need to advance different phases of the integrated methodology in a balanced way for the comprehensive development of Islamic social sciences.

The paper affirms that the aim of developing the Islamic social science methodology is to produce beneficial knowledge to enhance human welfare and also to shape societies based on moral foundations and axiological verities of Islam. Rooted in revelational and legacy knowledge sources and social realities, applying an iterative process bridges the gaps in normative goals and positive truths. Moving forward, a key factor that will determine the sound development of Islamic social sciences is the idea-generation phase, which will determine the quality, innovativeness and future directions of the research. In conclusion, the beneficial knowledge produced by Islamic social science methodology must be able to build moral societies, enhance human welfare, be a dynamic 'becoming process' and evolve as the social realities, structures, and problems change over time

Annex

Hadith

Hadith on Beneficial Knowledge

It was narrated from Jabir that: the Messenger of Allah said: "Ask Allah for beneficial knowledge and seek refuge with Allah from the knowledge that is of no benefit." (Sunnah Ibn Majah, Volume 5, Book 34, Hadith 3843, https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah:3843);

Umm Salama said that the Prophet used to say after the dawn prayer, "O God, I ask Thee for beneficial knowledge, acceptable action, and good provision." Mishkat al-Masabih, Book 9, Hadith 266, https://sunnah.com/mishkat:2498)

Hadith on Iman, Islam and Ihsan

This is based on a *hadith* narrated by Abu Huraira which states: One day while the Prophet (PBUH) was sitting in the company of some people, (The angel) Gabriel came and asked, "What is faith?" Allah's Messenger (PBUH) replied, 'Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, (the) meeting with Him, His Apostles, and to believe in Resurrection." Then he further asked, "What is Islam?" Allah's Messenger (PBUH) replied, "To worship Allah Alone and none else, to offer prayers perfectly to pay the compulsory charity (Zakat) and to observe fasts during the month of Ramadan." Then he further asked, "What is Ihsan (perfection)?" Allah's Messenger (PBUH) replied, "To worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion then you must consider that He is looking at you." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 2, Hadith 43; https://sunnah.com/bukhari:50)

Hadith on Grafting

Anas reported that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) happened to pass by the people who had been busy in grafting the trees. Thereupon he said: "If you were not to do it, it might be good for you. (So they abandoned this practice) and there was a decline in the yield. He (the Holy Prophet) happened to pass by them (and said): What has gone wrong with your trees? They said: You said so and so. Thereupon he said: You have better knowledge (of a technical skill) in the affairs of the world." (Sahih Muslim

Book 43, Hadith 186). See https://sunnah.com/muslim:2363

Hadith on Character

Abu Hurayra reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I was sent to perfect good character." (Al-Albani, Book 14, Hadith 272). See https://sunnah.com/urn/2302710)

Quranic verses

Quran (2: 261): "The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in every spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills."

Quran (18: 59): "And We destroyed the cities when they wronged, and We made for their destruction an appointed time."

Quran (21:107): "We have sent you (O Prophet) only as a mercy for the whole world."

Quran (22: 46): "Have they not travelled in the land so that they should have hearts with which to understand?"

Quran (29: 20): "Say: Travel in the earth and see how He made the first creation."

Quran (41: 53): "We will show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this (Quran) is the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is a Witness over all things?"

Sample Definitions of *Ilm* (Rosenthal, 1970)

Al-Baqillani: "Knowledge is the cognition of the object known as it is (p. 53);

Ibn Farighun: "Knowledge is the cognition of things and their realities without mistake or error." (p. 55);

Ibn Sabin: "Knowledge is the explanation of a thing as it is." (p. 58);

Nasir-i-Khosraw: "Knowledge is perception on our part of a thing according to its reality," or, "perception of a thing as it is." (p. 62);

Al-Amidi: "Knowledge is believing the thing (to be) as it is." (p. 63);

At-Tahanawi: "Knowledge is definitive and firm belief that conforms to actuality." (p. 64);

Abul Barakat: ". . . Knowledge is likewise cognition and perception, but in addition, it is granting him who hears and understands room for agreement and disagreement concerning the statement made . . ." (p.55);

Al-Amiri: "Knowledge is the comprehension of the thing as it is without mistake or error." (p. 57);

Fakhraddin ar-Razi: "Knowledge means that the mind obtains through it a form that conforms to the external object known" (p. 61).

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