

## ***Iqtibās* in Islamic Rhetorical Tradition: Aesthetic Function, Argumentative Force, and Ethical Quotation of Sacred Texts**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines *iqtibās* in the Islamic rhetorical tradition as a practice of quoting Qur'anic and prophetic language within human discourse. The study responds to the limitation of treating *iqtibās* merely as a decorative subcategory of *badī*, arguing instead that sacred quotation operates through a complex interaction of aesthetic force, argumentative authority, and ethical responsibility. Using a qualitative textual-hermeneutical method, the article analyses selected discussions from classical Arabic rhetoric, Qur'anic rhetorical theory, and examples of sacred phrasing in literary, homiletic, and argumentative contexts. The analysis is guided by three intersecting frameworks: Arabic rhetorical theory, intertextuality, and argumentation theory. The findings show that *iqtibās* functions first as aesthetic revoicing, because Qur'anic and prophetic phrases reactivate rhythm, semantic density, scriptural resonance, and devotional memory within new textual settings. Second, *iqtibās* carries argumentative force by serving as authority, warrant, analogy, moral reinforcement, or legitimating frame in Islamic discourse. Third, the study demonstrates that the ethical validity of *iqtibās* depends on source fidelity, contextual coherence, and interpretive transparency. The article contributes to Islamic rhetorical studies, Qur'anic studies, and religious communication by reframing *iqtibās* as an ethical-rhetorical act rather than a purely stylistic ornament. This framework is especially relevant for analysing sacred quotation in both classical texts and contemporary digital religious communication.

**Keywords:** *iqtibās*, Islamic rhetoric, sacred quotation, Qur'anic intertextuality, ethical interpretation

### **Abstrak**

Artikel ini mengkaji *iqtibās* dalam tradisi retorika Islam sebagai praktik pengutipan bahasa Al-Qur'an dan hadis dalam wacana manusia. Kajian ini berangkat dari keterbatasan pandangan yang menempatkan *iqtibās* semata-mata sebagai subkategori dekoratif dalam *badī*. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa kutipan teks suci bekerja melalui hubungan yang kompleks antara fungsi estetis, otoritas argumentatif, dan tanggung jawab etis. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif tekstual-hermeneutis, penelitian ini menganalisis pembahasan terpilih dari retorika Arab klasik, teori retorika Al-Qur'an, serta contoh penggunaan ungkapan sakral dalam konteks sastra, khutbah, nasihat etis, dan wacana argumentatif. Analisis diarahkan oleh tiga kerangka utama, yaitu teori retorika Arab, intertekstualitas, dan teori argumentasi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *iqtibās* pertama-tama berfungsi sebagai pengucapan ulang estetis karena ungkapan Qur'ani dan profetik mampu mengaktifkan kembali ritme, kepadatan makna, resonansi sakral, dan memori religius dalam konteks teks baru. Kedua, *iqtibās* memiliki daya argumentatif karena dapat berperan sebagai otoritas, dasar pembenaran, analogi, penguatan moral, atau bingkai legitimasi dalam wacana Islam. Ketiga, validitas etis *iqtibās* bergantung pada ketepatan sumber, koherensi konteks, dan transparansi interpretatif. Artikel ini berkontribusi pada studi retorika Islam, studi Al-Qur'an, dan komunikasi keagamaan dengan mereposisi *iqtibās* sebagai tindakan retorik-etis, bukan sekadar ornamen stilistika.

**Kata kunci:** *iqtibās*, retorika Islam, kutipan teks suci, intertekstualitas Qur'ani, interpretasi etis



## Introduction

The quotation of sacred texts has never been a merely decorative practice in Islamic intellectual history. In Qur'anic exegesis, preaching, poetry, adab literature, legal reasoning, and public religious discourse, the act of inserting revealed language into human speech has functioned as a way of producing beauty, claiming authority, shaping ethical judgment, and disciplining communal memory.<sup>1</sup> Within the Arabic rhetorical tradition, this practice is commonly discussed under *iqtibās*, namely the incorporation of Qur'anic or prophetic wording into a new composition without necessarily marking it as a formal citation. Classical manuals of *balāghah* usually locate *iqtibās* within *badī*, the science of stylistic embellishment, yet its function has always exceeded ornamentation. When sacred phrasing enters poetry, sermon, epistle, or argument, it does not merely beautify the utterance; it transfers a dense field of scriptural resonance into the host text and reorganizes how readers hear, judge, and trust the message.

The relevance of *iqtibās* has become sharper in contemporary Islamic Studies because sacred quotation now circulates across print, performance, and digital platforms with unprecedented speed. Islam is not only a textual tradition but also a global discursive community; recent demographic reports estimate Muslims at around a quarter of the world population, while studies of online religious expression show that Qur'anic verses are massively shared as acts of devotion, consolation, moral advice, and public identity formation.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the same communicative ecology exposes sacred texts to fragmentation, decontextualization, weak attribution, and rhetorical manipulation. Studies on fabricated ḥadīth and religious misinformation on Arabic social media demonstrate that quotation is not a neutral transfer of inherited authority but a contested practice in which authenticity, intention, context, and reception must be examined together.<sup>3</sup> This empirical reality makes *iqtibās* highly relevant to *Ushuluddin* and Islamic Studies, especially to Qur'anic studies, ḥadīth studies, Arabic rhetoric, Islamic ethics, and the study of religious authority.

The central problem addressed in this article lies in the tension between aesthetic legitimacy and ethical responsibility. On the one hand, the Islamic rhetorical tradition recognises the literary power of sacred textual borrowing: Qur'anic rhythm, lexical density, parallelism, and semantic compression can elevate ordinary discourse into a heightened register of meaning. On the other hand, sacred quotation is never an innocent stylistic device, because the quoted words carry theological authority and can be used to persuade, silence, sanctify, or delegitimise. A phrase borrowed from revelation may function as ornament, proof, affective trigger, communal memory, or moral verdict. The unresolved issue, therefore, is how *iqtibās* should be analysed without reducing it either to beautiful embellishment or to simple proof-texting. The problem becomes more complex when the quoted text is aesthetically transformed, partially cited,

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<sup>1</sup> Marhamah Annazah Tambunan Al Fiqri Ardiansyah, "From Normative Citation to Critical Analysis: Evaluating Methodological," *Dialogues in Qur'anic and Hadith Studies* 01, no. 1 (2026): 1–26; Al Fiqri Ardiansyah et al., "THE IMPACT OF ANCIENT QURANIC MANUSCRIPTS ON CONTEMPORARY LINGUISTIC AND EXEGETICAL STUDIES: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS" 5, no. 2 (2023): 60–76.

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, "How the Global Religious Landscape Changed from 2010 to 2020" (Pew Research Center, 2025), <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/06/09/how-the-global-religious-landscape-changed-from-2010-to-2020/>; N Abokhodair, A Elmadany, and W Magdy, "Holy Tweets: Exploring the Sharing of Quran on Twitter," *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction* 4, no. CSCW2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1145/3415230>.

<sup>3</sup> Mohamed Fawzi, Björn Ross, and Walid Magdy, "Fabricating Holiness: Characterizing Religious Misinformation Circulators on Arabic Social Media," *ArXiv*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2508.07845>.

recontextualised, or placed within an argumentative structure that was not present in the original scriptural context.

Previous studies provide important foundations but remain dispersed across separate scholarly conversations. Studies of Arabic rhetoric have shown that *balāghah* is not equivalent to Greco-Roman rhetoric, since it developed through grammar, poetics, Qur'anic exegesis, and the doctrine of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān*.<sup>4</sup> Research on Qur'anic rhetoric has examined how the Qur'an itself deploys argument, counter-discourse, reported speech, and legal reasoning to persuade its audience.<sup>5</sup> Intertextual studies of the Qur'an have also explored scriptural echoes, rewriting, and the relationship between Qur'anic discourse and earlier religious traditions.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, contemporary scholarship on digital Islam has begun to investigate how Qur'anic and ḥadīth materials circulate in everyday online communication.<sup>7</sup> Taken together, these works clarify the significance of rhetoric, argument, and quotation, yet they rarely place *iqtibās* itself at the centre of analysis as a single problem involving aesthetics, authority, and ethics.

This article identifies three specific gaps. Conceptually, *iqtibās* is still often treated as a subcategory of *badī'*, which leaves insufficient attention to its argumentative and ethical dimensions. Methodologically, studies of Qur'anic intertextuality usually privilege source relations, allusion, or historical parallels, while studies of rhetoric tend to classify figures without developing a framework for how sacred quotation operates in reception. Empirically and contextually, contemporary uses of sacred quotation—especially in sermons, religious writing, and digital discourse—are frequently discussed as matters of piety or misinformation, but not as continuations and transformations of a long rhetorical tradition. The result is a fragmented field in which the beauty of *iqtibās*, its persuasive force, and its ethical risks are rarely examined as interdependent phenomena.

Accordingly, this article asks three questions. First, how does *iqtibās* produce aesthetic effect within the Islamic rhetorical tradition through rhythm, semantic compression, resonance, and textual memory? Second, how does the quotation of sacred texts generate argumentative force by functioning as authority, warrant, analogy, or moral framing? Third, what ethical criteria are needed to distinguish responsible sacred quotation from decontextualised, manipulative, or misleading uses of Qur'anic and prophetic language? The objectives are therefore to reinterpret *iqtibās* beyond ornamental classification, to explain its role in Islamic modes of persuasion, and to propose an ethical-rhetorical framework for analysing sacred textual quotation in both classical and contemporary contexts.

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<sup>4</sup> Philip Halldén, "What Is Arab Islamic Rhetoric? Rethinking the History of Muslim Oratory Art and Homiletics," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 1 (2005): 19–38, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743805050021>; Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis* (Routledge, 2006), [https://www.routledge.com/search?kw=Arabic Rhetoric A Pragmatic Analysis Abdul-Raof](https://www.routledge.com/search?kw=Arabic+Rhetoric+A+Pragmatic+Analysis+Abdul-Raof).

<sup>5</sup> Rosalind Ward Gwynne, *Logic, Rhetoric and Legal Reasoning in the Qur'an: God's Arguments* (RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), <https://www.routledge.com/Logic-Rhetoric-and-Legal-Reasoning-in-the-Quran-Gods-Arguments/Gwynne/p/book/9780700712587>; Mehdi Azaiez, *Le Contre-Discours Coranique* (De Gruyter, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur'an and the Bible: Text and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); N Sinai, *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction, The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction: The Qur'an*, 2017, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85212730983&partnerID=40&md5=a21fde1ceb5ab73c4440175a64fcddac>.

<sup>7</sup> Abokhodair, Elmadany, and Magdy, "Holy Tweets: Exploring the Sharing of Quran on Twitter"; Fawzi, Ross, and Magdy, "Fabricating Holiness: Characterizing Religious Misinformation Circulators on Arabic Social Media."

The theoretical framework of this study combines three perspectives. From classical Arabic rhetoric, it draws on al-Jurjānī's theory of *nazm*, which understands eloquence as the meaningful arrangement of words rather than verbal decoration alone.<sup>8</sup> From intertextual theory, it treats *iqtibās* as a relation between a sacred source text and a new communicative setting, where meaning emerges through recognition, transformation, and reception.<sup>9</sup> From argumentation and pragmatic rhetoric, it examines how quoted sacred language functions within claims, warrants, audience positioning, and contextual effects.<sup>10</sup> This combined framework allows *iqtibās* to be read as an aesthetic, argumentative, and ethical act at once.

The novelty of this study lies in its refusal to isolate beauty from authority or authority from responsibility. By reframing *iqtibās* as a multidimensional rhetorical practice, the article contributes to ongoing debates in *Ushuluddin* and Islamic Studies on scriptural interpretation, religious communication, and the ethics of speaking with sacred words. It offers a more precise vocabulary for analysing how Qur'anic and prophetic expressions are aesthetically revoiced, argumentatively mobilised, and ethically constrained. Such a framework is especially significant in a period when sacred texts circulate widely beyond scholarly institutions, making the responsible interpretation and quotation of revelation not only a classical rhetorical issue but also a contemporary intellectual necessity.

## Methodology

This study employs a qualitative textual-hermeneutical design aimed at examining *iqtibās* as a rhetorical practice in the Islamic scholarly tradition. The choice of a qualitative design is based on the nature of the research problem, which does not seek to measure the frequency of sacred quotations statistically, but to interpret how Qur'anic and prophetic expressions are aesthetically revoiced, argumentatively mobilised, and ethically constrained within Islamic discourse. Qualitative inquiry is particularly appropriate for research that investigates meaning, context, interpretation, and the relationship between textual form and intellectual function.<sup>11</sup> More specifically, this article combines close textual reading, qualitative content analysis, and hermeneutical interpretation. The combination is necessary because *iqtibās* is not only a formal rhetorical device but also an intertextual and theological act involving sacred authority, reader recognition, and ethical responsibility.

The primary sources of the study consist of selected classical works of Arabic rhetoric and Qur'anic rhetorical theory that discuss *iqtibās*, *badī*, eloquence, textual arrangement, and the relation between divine and human speech. These include al-Jurjānī's *Dalā'il al-I'jāz*, al-Qazwīnī's *al-Īdāh fī 'ulūm al-balāghah*, and representative discussions from later manuals of *balāghah* in which *iqtibās* is classified as a rhetorical form. These texts are selected because they occupy a foundational position in the development of Arabic rhetoric and because they provide the conceptual vocabulary through which Muslim scholars historically

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<sup>8</sup> 'Abd al-Qāhir Al-Jurjānī, *Dalā'il al-I'jāz Fī Al-Qur'ān*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr (Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2004), <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=Dalail+al-Ijaz+al-Jurjani+Mahmud+Muhammad+Shakir>.

<sup>9</sup> Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2011), <https://www.routledge.com/Intertextuality/Allen/p/book/9780415596943>.

<sup>10</sup> Gwynne, *Logic, Rhetoric and Legal Reasoning in the Qur'an: God's Arguments*; Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis*.

<sup>11</sup> John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Sage Publications, 2018).

understood eloquence, textual borrowing, and the aesthetic force of Qur'anic language. In addition to these theoretical sources, the study uses selected examples of *iqtibās* from Islamic literary, homiletic, and argumentative discourse, especially cases in which sacred phrases are inserted into human speech without functioning as formal exegetical citation. This distinction is important because the object of analysis is not Qur'anic exegesis itself, but the rhetorical recontextualisation of sacred wording in non-revelatory discourse.

Source selection follows purposive and criterion-based sampling. A text or passage is included when it meets at least three criteria: first, it contains identifiable Qur'anic or prophetic wording, whether in exact, partial, or adapted form; second, the quoted expression is embedded in a new rhetorical setting such as poetry, sermon, epistle, ethical counsel, or argumentative prose; third, the quotation performs a discernible aesthetic, argumentative, or ethical function rather than appearing merely as a neutral reference. Passages are excluded when they consist only of formal tafsīr citation, isnād-based ḥadīth transmission, or general religious vocabulary that cannot be traced to a specific sacred source. This criterion is used to prevent the study from confusing ordinary Islamic terminology with *iqtibās* as a distinct rhetorical practice. The selection procedure follows the principle of theoretical relevance rather than statistical representativeness, since the purpose of the study is to construct an interpretive framework, not to generalise from a large corpus in the positivistic sense.<sup>12</sup>

The analytical framework is built from three intersecting bodies of scholarship. The first is classical Arabic rhetoric, particularly the theory of eloquence, textual arrangement, and pragmatic effect. Al-Jurjānī's concept of *naẓm* is used to examine how meaning emerges from the relational arrangement of words rather than from isolated lexical beauty.<sup>13</sup> Abdul-Raof's pragmatic approach to Arabic rhetoric is also employed to connect rhetorical form with communicative effect, audience recognition, and discourse function.<sup>14</sup> The second framework is intertextuality, which helps explain how a quoted sacred fragment produces meaning through its relation to a prior authoritative text and a new host context.<sup>15</sup> The third framework is argumentation theory and Qur'anic rhetorical studies, especially the idea that sacred quotation can operate as warrant, authority, analogy, refutation, or moral framing within an argument.<sup>16</sup> These frameworks are not treated as competing models but as complementary lenses for analysing the multidimensional nature of *iqtibās*.

The interpretive procedure consists of four stages. The first stage is textual identification. Each selected passage is examined to identify the quoted sacred expression, its scriptural source, and the degree of verbal correspondence between the source text and the host text. The analysis distinguishes between exact quotation, partial quotation, lexical echo, syntactic adaptation, and semantic allusion. The second stage is rhetorical analysis. At this level, the study asks how the quoted expression contributes to the aesthetic quality of the host text, including rhythm, compression, semantic density, tonal elevation, irony, emotional intensification, or stylistic closure. The third stage is argumentative analysis. Here, the study examines whether the quotation functions as proof, warrant, moral reinforcement, refutation, communal memory, or authority marker. This stage is

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<sup>12</sup> Margrit Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice* (Sage, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Al-Jurjānī, *Dalā'il al-Alf'jāz Fī Al-Qur'ān*.

<sup>14</sup> Abdul-Raof, *Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis*.

<sup>15</sup> Allen, *Intertextuality*.

<sup>16</sup> Gwynne, *Logic, Rhetoric and Legal Reasoning in the Qur'an: God's Arguments: Azaiez, Le Contre-Discours Coranique*.

guided by the insight that arguments do not operate only through formal logic but also through culturally recognised warrants and shared textual authority.<sup>17</sup> The fourth stage is ethical-hermeneutical evaluation. This stage assesses whether the quotation preserves the contextual integrity of the sacred text, whether the new usage is consistent with its theological and moral horizon, and whether the quotation clarifies or manipulates religious meaning.

The study modifies conventional qualitative content analysis by adding a normative-hermeneutical layer. Standard qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to classify textual patterns systematically, but it is insufficient on its own for analysing sacred quotation because the ethical status of *iqtibās* cannot be reduced to coding categories alone.<sup>18</sup> For that reason, the coding of rhetorical functions is followed by interpretive evaluation grounded in Islamic rhetorical theory, Qur'anic hermeneutics, and the ethics of religious transmission. This modification is methodologically justified because the object of the study is not ordinary literary borrowing, but the re-use of sacred language whose authority is inseparable from theological meaning and communal responsibility. The hermeneutical orientation of the study is informed by the view that interpretation requires attention to textual horizon, historical situatedness, and the movement between part and whole.<sup>19</sup>

To ensure methodological transparency, the analysis applies consistent coding categories across all selected passages: textual form, source relation, aesthetic function, argumentative function, contextual shift, and ethical implication. Textual form refers to whether the quotation is exact, partial, adapted, or allusive. Source relation identifies whether the passage draws on Qur'anic wording, prophetic tradition, or both. Aesthetic function examines how the quotation modifies the beauty, rhythm, density, or affective force of the text. Argumentative function identifies how the quotation supports, intensifies, legitimises, or redirects a claim. Contextual shift compares the original scriptural context with the new rhetorical environment. Ethical implication evaluates whether the quotation respects or distorts the semantic and theological force of the sacred source. This coding structure enables the study to avoid impressionistic interpretation while still preserving the depth required for rhetorical and hermeneutical analysis.

Because this is a textual study, it does not involve human participants, interviews, questionnaires, or field observation. The validity of the analysis is pursued through source triangulation, conceptual triangulation, and interpretive consistency. Source triangulation is achieved by comparing classical rhetorical manuals, Qur'anic rhetorical scholarship, and selected textual examples. Conceptual triangulation is achieved by reading *iqtibās* through rhetoric, intertextuality, and argumentation theory rather than through a single disciplinary lens. Interpretive consistency is maintained by applying the same analytical sequence to each passage and by distinguishing clearly between description, interpretation, and normative evaluation. Through this design, the study provides a methodologically accountable way to examine *iqtibās* as an

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<sup>17</sup> Stephen E Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*, Updated (Cambridge University Press, 2003), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/uses-of-argument/26CF801BC12004587B66778297D5567C>; Gwynne, *Logic, Rhetoric and Legal Reasoning in the Qur'an: God's Arguments*.

<sup>18</sup> Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2019); Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976); Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2004).

Islamic rhetorical practice that is simultaneously aesthetic, argumentative, and ethical.

## Results and Discussion

### *Iqtibās* beyond *Badī*: Reframing Sacred Quotation as a Rhetorical-Hermeneutical Practice

The principal finding of this section is that *iqtibās* should not be confined to the category of *badī* as a decorative figure of speech, because its operation involves a more complex movement between sacred authority, textual memory, aesthetic recognition, and interpretive transfer. In the classical taxonomy of Arabic rhetoric, *iqtibās* is often treated as a stylistic insertion of Qur'anic or prophetic wording into human discourse. Such classification is useful at the descriptive level, but it becomes insufficient when the quoted material is not ordinary language but revelation. Sacred quotation does not merely embellish expression; it repositions the host text within a wider scriptural horizon. This means that *iqtibās* functions simultaneously as ornament, mnemonic trigger, theological echo, and hermeneutical act.

The textual evidence supports this broader reading. Phrases such as *fā-sabrun jamīl* from the Qur'anic story of Jacob (Q 12:18; 12:83), *nūr 'alā nūr* from the Light Verse (Q 24:35), or *wa-mā al-ḥayāt al-dunyā illā matā' al-ghurūr* from Qur'anic reflections on worldly life (Q 3:185; 57:20) acquire a different rhetorical status when they appear in sermons, letters, poetry, or ethical admonition. Their force does not arise only from lexical beauty; it comes from the reader's recognition that the utterance carries a prior sacred life. Once transferred into a new discourse, the phrase activates memory, emotion, and doctrinal familiarity. This explains why *iqtibās* cannot be reduced to a surface-level stylistic device. It is better understood as a re-voicing of revelation within a human communicative frame.

This finding refines recent discussions on Qur'anic aesthetics and Islamic textuality. Kermani's study of the Qur'an's aesthetic reception shows that the experience of Qur'anic beauty has historically been bound to hearing, affect, and recognition, not simply to formal linguistic excellence.<sup>20</sup> From this perspective, *iqtibās* works because the sacred phrase remains audible inside the new composition. It is not absorbed completely by the host text; rather, it preserves a trace of its revelatory origin. Cuypers' rhetorical analysis of Qur'anic composition further supports the idea that Qur'anic meaning is deeply shaped by arrangement, symmetry, and textual architecture.<sup>21</sup> Although *iqtibās* occurs outside the Qur'an, its persuasive effect depends on the audience's awareness of that earlier architecture.

The hermeneutical dimension becomes clearer when *iqtibās* is read through contemporary debates in Islamic Studies. Ahmed argues that Islam should not be reduced to legal normativity alone, since Islamic meaning has also been produced through aesthetics, ambiguity, philosophy, poetry, and cultural forms.<sup>22</sup> This insight is crucial for rethinking *iqtibās*: the practice is Islamic not only because it cites revelation, but because it stages the interaction between revelation and

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<sup>20</sup> Navid A4 - Crawford Kermani Tony, *God Is Beautiful: The Aesthetic Experience of the Qur'an* (Polity Press, 2015), <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/God+is+Beautiful%3A+The+Aesthetic+Experience+of+the+Quran-p-9780745645267>.

<sup>21</sup> M Cuypers, *The Composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical Analysis, The Composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical Analysis*, 2015, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85049160610&partnerID=40&md5=aa8750643913d2761fa34e5097f48c07>.

<sup>22</sup> Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

historically situated Muslim expression. Bauer's work on ambiguity in Islamic civilization likewise helps explain why sacred quotation can carry multiple legitimate resonances without becoming interpretive chaos.<sup>23</sup> A quoted Qur'anic phrase may console, warn, praise, rebuke, or sanctify depending on its new rhetorical environment.

The discussion also expands studies of Qur'anic intertextuality and contemporary interpretation.<sup>24</sup> Neuwirth's account of the Qur'an as a text embedded in a late antique discursive world demonstrates that sacred discourse itself operates through dialogue, response, and reconfiguration of earlier forms.<sup>25</sup> Pregill's work on scriptural transformation similarly shows that textual meaning often emerges through adaptation rather than mechanical repetition.<sup>26</sup> In modern contexts, Pink's study of contemporary Qur'anic interpretation highlights the role of media, communities, and interpretive genealogies in shaping how Qur'anic meanings circulate.<sup>27</sup> These perspectives suggest that *iqtibās* should be analysed not as quotation alone, but as a controlled movement between textual inheritance and new communicative use.

The theoretical implication is that *iqtibās* demands a methodological shift from rhetorical classification to rhetorical-hermeneutical analysis. Classification asks only whether a passage contains borrowed sacred wording; hermeneutical analysis asks what happens to meaning, authority, and reception when that wording is relocated. This shift also has methodological significance. It allows the researcher to examine *iqtibās* through several analytical layers: the source phrase, the host text, the degree of transformation, the intended rhetorical effect, and the ethical implications of recontextualisation. Such an approach contributes to Islamic rhetorical studies by showing that sacred quotation is not a marginal ornament within *balāghah*, but a key site where aesthetics, interpretation, and religious authority intersect.

### **Aesthetic Revoicing of Revelation: Rhythm, Semantic Density, and Scriptural Resonance in *Iqtibās***

The main finding of this subsection is that the aesthetic function of *iqtibās* lies not simply in verbal beauty, but in its capacity to reactivate the sonic, semantic, and affective memory of revelation within a new literary or argumentative environment. A quoted Qur'anic or prophetic phrase does not enter the host text as an ordinary ornament; it arrives with a recognizable rhythm, a compressed semantic field, and a sacred history of recitation. This explains why *iqtibās* often produces an effect disproportionate to its length. A brief expression may reshape the entire tone of a poem, sermon, epistle, or ethical reflection because the audience hears more than the inserted words: they hear the scriptural horizon from which those words come.

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas A4 · Biesterfeldt Bauer Hinrich A4 · Tunstall, Tricia, *A Culture of Ambiguity: An Alternative History of Islam* (Columbia University Press, 2021), <https://cup.columbia.edu/book/a-culture-of-ambiguity/9780231170659>.

<sup>24</sup> Al Fiqri Ardiansyah, "From Normative Citation to Critical Analysis: Evaluating Methodological."

<sup>25</sup> Angelika Neuwirth, *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity: A Shared Heritage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Michael E Pregill, *The Golden Calf between Bible and Qur'an: Scripture, Polemic, and Exegesis from Late Antiquity to Islam* (Oxford University Press, 2020), <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-golden-calf-between-bible-and-quran-9780198852421>.

<sup>27</sup> Johanna Pink, *Muslim Qur'anic Interpretation Today: Media, Genealogies and Interpretive Communities* (Equinox, 2019).

The textual evidence is visible in expressions such as *faṣabrun jamīl* (“so beautiful patience”), *nūr ‘alā nūr* (“light upon light”), *lā taḥzan inna Allāha ma‘anā* (“do not grieve; God is with us”), and *kullu nafsin dhā‘iqat al-mawt* (“every soul shall taste death”). These phrases do not merely convey patience, illumination, consolation, or mortality in abstract terms. Each carries a particular Qur’anic atmosphere: Jacob’s grief, the metaphysical imagery of divine light, the intimacy of prophetic reassurance, and the universal inevitability of death. When such expressions are relocated into human discourse, their aesthetic force emerges through recognition. The listener or reader encounters a double movement: the phrase belongs to the immediate composition, yet it also summons its scriptural origin. This double belonging is what makes *iqtibās* aesthetically distinctive.

This finding refines the literary approach to the Qur’an by showing that Qur’anic aesthetics continue to operate beyond the Qur’anic text itself. Zadeh’s discussion of the “literary turn” in Qur’anic Studies is useful here because it shifts attention from doctrinal extraction alone to form, reception, and textual performance.<sup>28</sup> However, *iqtibās* pushes that approach further: it shows that Qur’anic literariness is not confined to the original scripture but is reactivated whenever sacred phrasing is carefully embedded in later Islamic discourse. Similarly, studies of the Qur’an’s role in *adab* demonstrate that the Qur’an shaped literary taste, moral imagination, and stylistic authority across classical Arabic writing. The present analysis extends that argument by identifying *iqtibās* as one of the mechanisms through which scriptural language becomes aesthetically available to literary culture without losing its sacred density.

The sonic dimension is equally important. Qur’anic language is historically received not only as written text but also as recited sound. Its pauses, cadences, phonetic texture, and rhythmic closures form part of its aesthetic reception. Studies of Islamic sound and media have shown that voice, repetition, and auditory atmosphere shape religious affect and communal recognition.<sup>29</sup> This insight helps explain why even a written *iqtibās* may produce an aural effect: the reader silently “hears” the sacred phrase because it is stored in devotional memory as recited language. Contemporary work on Qur’anic recitation technologies also confirms that the Qur’an’s acoustic dimension is not incidental; digital recitation research continues to treat pronunciation, rhythm, and prosodic discipline as defining elements of Qur’anic transmission.<sup>30</sup>

The semantic density of *iqtibās* depends on this combination of sound and memory. A phrase such as *nūr ‘alā nūr* does not function as a generic metaphor for brightness. It carries theological, mystical, and exegetical associations that cannot be exhausted by literal translation. Likewise, *faṣabrun jamīl* condenses narrative suffering, prophetic restraint, and moral discipline into two words. In methodological terms, the analysis of *iqtibās* therefore requires more than identifying the borrowed phrase. It must ask how the phrase’s earlier Qur’anic environment, its recitational familiarity, and its new textual placement interact to

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<sup>28</sup> Travis Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur’an: Translation and the Rise of Persian Exegesis* (Oxford University Press, 2015), <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-vernacular-quran-9780198733331>.

<sup>29</sup> Patrick Eisenlohr, *Sounding Islam: Voice, Media, and Sonic Atmospheres in an Indian Ocean World* (University of California Press, 2018), <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520298729/sounding-islam>.

<sup>30</sup> Ali Al Harere and Khaled Al Jallad, “Quran Recitation Recognition Using End-to-End Deep Learning,” *ArXiv*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2305.07034>; M H Al-Kharusi et al., “A Critical Review of the Need for Knowledge-Centric Evaluation of Quranic Recitation,” *ArXiv*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2510.12858>; Faisal Alherran, “Tadabur: A Large-Scale Quran Audio Dataset,” *ArXiv*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2604.18932>.

produce meaning. Cross-referential Qur'anic studies are relevant here because they show how Qur'anic phrases generate meaning through networks of recurrence and association rather than through isolated lexical units.<sup>31</sup>

The theoretical implication is that *iqtibās* should be read as aesthetic revoicing. It is aesthetic because it intensifies rhythm, tone, and semantic resonance; it is revoicing because it allows sacred language to speak again under new rhetorical conditions. This finding expands existing scholarship by moving the analysis of *iqtibās* beyond stylistic classification toward a reception-based model of sacred language. Methodologically, it also provides a more precise procedure for studying quoted revelation: the researcher must examine the source phrase, the host context, the degree of recognisability, the sonic memory activated by the phrase, and the semantic surplus produced by recontextualisation. In this sense, *iqtibās* is not a minor ornament in Arabic rhetoric but a sophisticated aesthetic operation through which revelation continues to shape Islamic literary and argumentative expression.

### **Argumentative Force of Sacred Quotation: *Iqtibās* as Authority, Warrant, and Moral Framing**

The central finding of this subsection is that *iqtibās* acquires argumentative force when sacred wording is not merely cited but made to function as a warrant that authorizes, stabilizes, or morally intensifies a claim. In Islamic discourse, a Qur'anic or prophetic phrase can alter the epistemic status of an utterance: what might otherwise appear as advice, poetic judgment, or ethical reflection becomes attached to a higher order of authority. This does not mean that every sacred quotation automatically proves an argument. Rather, the persuasive power of *iqtibās* depends on how the quoted expression is positioned, what claim it supports, and whether the new use preserves the semantic and normative horizon of the source text.

The textual evidence can be observed in the way Qur'anic phrases such as *wa-Allāhu ya'lamu wa-antum lā ta'lamūn* ("God knows, while you do not know"), *inna Allāha ma'a al-ṣābirīn* ("God is with the patient"), or *lā ikrāha fī al-dīn* ("there is no compulsion in religion") are frequently recontextualized in sermons, counsel, public argument, and moral persuasion. These expressions do not operate only as beautiful reminders; they organize the audience's judgment. The first phrase can limit human certainty, the second can transform endurance into a religious virtue, and the third can frame coercion as morally and theologically problematic. In such cases, *iqtibās* functions as a bridge between a specific rhetorical claim and a larger scriptural order recognized by the audience.

This finding expands contemporary scholarship on Islamic legal and ethical reasoning. Recent studies of Islamic law emphasize that Qur'an and hadith do not function as isolated proof-texts; they are embedded in interpretive traditions, juristic disagreement, ethical reasoning, and institutional authority.<sup>32</sup> *Iqtibās* reflects this same structure at the rhetorical level. It does not simply place a sacred phrase inside a new text; it compresses a chain of authority into a brief verbal unit. When a speaker invokes a sacred expression, the quotation may perform the work

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<sup>31</sup> Mun'im Sirry, *The Quran with Cross-References* (De Gruyter, 2022), <https://www.degruyter.com/document/isbn/9783110780004/html>.

<sup>32</sup> Anver M Emon and Rumea Ahmed, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Law* (Oxford University Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199679010.001.0001>; John L Esposito and Natana J DeLong-Bas, *Shariah: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford University Press, 2018), <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/shariah-9780199325059>.

of evidence, analogy, reminder, warning, or legitimating frame. Its argumentative success depends less on length than on recognizability and placement.<sup>33</sup>

The concept of warrant is useful here, but it must be adapted to the Islamic rhetorical context. In general argumentation, a warrant connects a claim to a reason that the audience accepts. In *iqtibās*, the warrant is often implicit: the audience understands that a Qur'anic or prophetic expression carries normative weight because sacred language is already embedded in a shared epistemic hierarchy. This is why the quotation can persuade without extended explanation. Yet the same mechanism also creates risk. A sacred phrase can strengthen a valid argument, but it can also be used to over-authorize a weak claim, close debate prematurely, or present a contested interpretation as if it were identical with revelation itself. Rume Ahmed's discussion of legal adaptability is relevant here because it shows that Islamic legal reasoning often involves strategic navigation between textual authority and practical reasoning, not mechanical citation alone.<sup>34</sup>

This argument also refines studies of textual authority in Islamic societies. Messick's anthropological work on sharī'a documents demonstrates that Islamic authority often travels through written forms, citations, signatures, and textual procedures rather than through abstract doctrine alone.<sup>35</sup> *Iqtibās* operates similarly in miniature. It turns a fragment of sacred language into a portable unit of authority. However, unlike a formal fatwa, isnād, or legal document, *iqtibās* often works through rhetorical immediacy. Its authority is felt at the level of recognition before it is formally analysed. This is precisely why it requires critical interpretation: the speed of recognition may obscure the need for contextual verification.

The contemporary relevance of this finding becomes clearer in digital settings. Studies of hadith transmission using computational and network-based methods show that religious authority is sustained through chains, communities, and patterns of circulation, not merely through individual statements.<sup>36</sup> More recent work on Islamic legal reasoning in AI systems also warns that religious arguments can appear plausible while lacking accurate grounding in legal plurality and source discipline.<sup>37</sup> Although *iqtibās* belongs to a classical rhetorical tradition, its argumentative logic is highly visible today in short-form religious content, digital preaching, and moral messaging, where sacred phrases are often used to confer instant legitimacy.

The theoretical implication is that *iqtibās* should be analysed as a rhetorical act of authorization. It produces force by joining three elements: the authority of the sacred source, the audience's recognition of that source, and the speaker's strategic placement of the quotation within an argument. Methodologically, this requires researchers to examine not only whether a passage contains Qur'anic or prophetic wording, but also what argumentative burden the quotation is made to carry. Academically, this approach contributes to Islamic rhetorical studies by

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<sup>33</sup> Dinda Silvani Paranginangin Niswa Mawaddah, Hilya Mahfuza, Syifa Farizkha Indriani, "Hadith as an Epistemic Tradition: Toward a Dialogue between Classical Criticism and Modern Academic Inquiry," *Dialogues in Qur'anic and Hadith Studies* 01, no. 1 (2026): 50–76.

<sup>34</sup> F Ahmed et al., "A Qur'anic View of Mother Tongue as the Medium of Education," *Trames* 22, no. 3 (2018): 299–309, <https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2018.3.06>.

<sup>35</sup> Brinkley Messick, *Sharia Scripts: A Historical Anthropology* (Columbia University Press, 2018), <https://cup.columbia.edu/book/sharia-scripts/9780231181068>.

<sup>36</sup> Tanvirul Alam and Jodi Schneider, "Social Network Analysis of Hadith Narrators from Sahih Bukhari," *ArXiv*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2102.02009>.

<sup>37</sup> Eziuddin Elmahjub et al., "IslamicLegalBench: Evaluating LLMs Knowledge and Reasoning of Islamic Law across 1,200 Years of Islamic Pluralist Legal Traditions," *ArXiv*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2602.21226>.

showing that *iqtibās* is not a secondary ornament of *badī*, but a condensed form of religious reasoning in which aesthetics, authority, and moral judgment converge.

### **Ethical Limits of *Iqtibās*: Contextual Integrity, Misquotation, and Responsible Use of Sacred Texts**

The main finding of this subsection is that the ethical validity of *iqtibās* depends not only on the beauty or persuasive success of sacred quotation, but on whether the quoted expression preserves contextual integrity, source accuracy, and interpretive responsibility. Since *iqtibās* draws upon Qur'anic and prophetic language, it cannot be evaluated as an ordinary literary borrowing. The quoted phrase carries a sacred genealogy, and its relocation into a new discourse may either illuminate meaning or distort it. This makes *iqtibās* a morally charged rhetorical practice: the speaker is not merely using eloquent language, but borrowing from a source that Muslims recognize as normatively binding.

The textual basis for this ethical concern can be seen in Qur'anic warnings against speaking falsely in God's name, concealing testimony, or making claims of religious legitimacy without knowledge. Verses such as Q 16:116—"do not say, concerning what your tongues falsely describe, 'this is lawful and this is unlawful'"—establish a strong ethical boundary around religious speech. In the context of *iqtibās*, this principle means that sacred phrasing should not be detached from its semantic environment in order to authorize a claim that the original text does not support. A quotation may be aesthetically elegant and rhetorically powerful, yet ethically defective if it narrows, reverses, or manipulates the meaning of the source text.

This finding refines contemporary scholarship on Islamic authority by showing that the problem of quotation is not only textual but also institutional and communicative.<sup>38</sup> Bano's work on modern Islamic authority demonstrates that religious knowledge is mediated through scholars, institutions, publics, and social change rather than through texts alone.<sup>39</sup> From this perspective, irresponsible *iqtibās* becomes dangerous because it bypasses interpretive discipline while retaining the symbolic force of revelation. Blecher's study of hadith commentary across a millennium similarly shows that prophetic reports have historically required commentary, verification, and interpretive framing rather than isolated extraction.<sup>40</sup> This reinforces the argument that sacred quotation must remain accountable to inherited procedures of understanding.

The ethical challenge becomes more acute in digital environments. Short religious posts, video captions, memes, and algorithmically circulated sermons often privilege brevity, emotional force, and shareability over contextual explanation. Digital religion scholarship has shown that online religious authority is shaped by visibility, networks, and platform affordances, not merely by scholarly qualification.<sup>41</sup> In such spaces, *iqtibās* may travel far beyond its original audience,

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<sup>38</sup> Muhammad Nabil Ardhani Isnayanti, Muhammad Ghifary Ramadani Mallo, "Hadith Authority in Late Modern Islamic Ethics: Reframing Transmission, Rational Deliberation, and Normative Moral Reasoning," *Dialogues in Qur'anic and Hadith Studies* 01, no. 1 (2026): 77–101.

<sup>39</sup> M Bano, *MODERN ISLAMIC AUTHORITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE: VOLUME 2: EVOLVING DEBATES IN THE WEST*, *Modern Islamic Authority and Social Change: Volume 2: Evolving Debates in the West*, vol. 2, 2018, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85216707812&partnerID=40&md5=3e58ee20620406baa2eebc2887de2c43>.

<sup>40</sup> J Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary across a Millennium* (University of California Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520295933.001.0001>.

<sup>41</sup> Heidi A Campbell and Ruth Tsuria, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (Routledge, 2021); Gary R Bunt, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

entering contexts where users lack the linguistic, exegetical, or historical tools needed to evaluate it. The problem is not that sacred quotation circulates online, but that circulation can separate quotation from accountability.

The concept of context collapse helps explain this risk. In social media environments, a statement intended for one audience may be received by many audiences with different assumptions, levels of knowledge, and ideological commitments.<sup>42</sup> Brandtzaeg and Lüders describe digital communication as marked by temporal and contextual collapse, in which messages move beyond their original setting and acquire new meanings through circulation.<sup>43</sup> Applied to *iqtibās*, this means that a sacred phrase quoted for consolation may be re-shared as legal proof, political accusation, sectarian judgment, or moral condemnation. The ethical limit of *iqtibās* therefore lies not only in the intention of the speaker, but also in the foreseeable consequences of decontextualized circulation.

This discussion challenges approaches that treat *iqtibās* merely as a technical category within *badī*. A purely formal analysis can identify whether Qur'anic or prophetic wording appears in a text, but it cannot determine whether the quotation is ethically responsible. The present study therefore proposes three criteria for evaluating sacred quotation: first, source fidelity, meaning that the wording, attribution, and reference should be accurate; second, contextual coherence, meaning that the new usage should not contradict the semantic and moral horizon of the original passage; and third, interpretive transparency, meaning that the speaker must distinguish between revelation itself and the speaker's own application of it.

The theoretical implication is that *iqtibās* must be understood as an ethical-rhetorical act. It joins beauty, authority, and responsibility in a single textual movement. Methodologically, this requires researchers to move beyond identifying quotation toward examining how a sacred phrase is selected, framed, circulated, and received. Academically, the contribution of this subsection is to establish that the responsible use of *iqtibās* requires both rhetorical sensitivity and epistemic humility. The eloquence of sacred quotation cannot justify interpretive carelessness; in Islamic rhetorical tradition, the most powerful speech is not merely that which persuades, but that which remains faithful to the moral burden of the sacred text.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that *iqtibās* cannot be adequately understood as a minor decorative device within *badī*, because the quotation of Qur'anic and prophetic language operates at the intersection of aesthetics, authority, interpretation, and ethical responsibility. The analysis has shown that *iqtibās* is not merely a stylistic insertion of sacred wording into human discourse, but a rhetorical-hermeneutical practice through which sacred language is recontextualized, recognized, and made meaningful within new communicative settings. In this sense, *iqtibās* extends beyond ornamental classification and becomes a key mechanism through which Islamic rhetorical tradition negotiates the relationship between revelation and human expression.

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<sup>42</sup> Wafiq Mayada and Destia Azzahra, "From Textual Authority to Contextual Reasoning: The Epistemology of Qur'anic Legal Interpretation in Classical and Modern Tafsir Introduction Because It Mediates the Relationship between Revelation, Normativity, Ethical Reasoning, and Literalist or Legally Mechanical. Legal Interpretation. Rather than Relying Exclusively on Inherited Legal Classifications And" 01, no. 1 (2026): 40–67.

<sup>43</sup> Petter Bae Brandtzaeg and Marika Lüders, "Time Collapse in Social Media: Extending the Context Collapse," *Social Media + Society* 4, no. 1 (2018): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118763349>.

In relation to the first research objective, the study demonstrates that the aesthetic function of *iqtibās* lies in its ability to reactivate the rhythm, semantic density, and scriptural resonance of revelation. Qur'anic and prophetic phrases acquire renewed expressive force when placed in poetry, sermons, ethical counsel, or argumentative prose, because readers and listeners recognize not only the wording itself but also the sacred memory attached to it. The aesthetic power of *iqtibās* therefore depends on the interaction between the source text, the host discourse, and the audience's prior familiarity with sacred language.

Regarding the second objective, the study finds that *iqtibās* also possesses strong argumentative force. Sacred quotation can function as authority, warrant, analogy, moral reinforcement, or legitimating frame. Its persuasive effect emerges from the recognized status of Qur'an and hadith within Islamic epistemology. However, the study also shows that this force is not automatically valid; it must be evaluated according to the accuracy of attribution, the coherence of context, and the argumentative burden placed upon the quoted expression.

The third objective is addressed through the ethical framework proposed in the study. Responsible *iqtibās* requires source fidelity, contextual coherence, and interpretive transparency. These criteria are especially significant in contemporary religious communication, where sacred phrases frequently circulate across sermons, digital platforms, social media captions, and short-form religious content. The study therefore argues that rhetorical beauty and persuasive strength cannot justify decontextualized or manipulative quotation of sacred texts.

The theoretical contribution of this article lies in reframing *iqtibās* as an ethical-rhetorical act rather than a purely literary embellishment. It contributes to Islamic rhetorical studies, Qur'anic studies, and the study of religious communication by offering an integrated model that connects aesthetic revoicing, argumentative authority, and ethical accountability. Broader implications of the study point to the need for greater methodological care in analysing sacred quotation, especially in contexts where religious language is rapidly circulated and detached from scholarly interpretive discipline. Future research may expand this framework through comparative analysis of *iqtibās* in classical Arabic poetry, Friday sermons, tafsīr literature, contemporary da'wah media, or digital Islamic discourse, thereby testing how sacred quotation operates across different genres, audiences, and historical settings.

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