

Challenging the Epistemic Divide: Islamization of Reason in the Twin Towers Model of Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the problem of dichotomy between religious knowledge and science in Islamic education, which leads to epistemological fragmentation and weak integration between religious values and scientific development. The purpose of this study is to analyze in depth the conceptualization of integrative education through the Integrated Twin Towers model, particularly focusing on the mechanism of Islamization of reason within the latest curriculum of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. This study employs a qualitative approach using library research and document analysis methods, with the primary source being the 2025 Twin Towers Scientific Integration textbook, supported by relevant literature from the last five years. Data were analyzed using content analysis and a hermeneutic approach. The findings indicate a paradigm shift in knowledge integration from the Islamization of knowledge to the Islamization of reason, emphasizing the reconstruction of academic thinking rather than merely integrating disciplinary structures. The operationalization of the Islamization of reason is carried out through the double movement hermeneutic approach, which dialectically connects revelation texts with empirical reality. Furthermore, integration is strengthened through experiential learning, encouraging students to reflect on social realities critically. These findings suggest that the Twin Towers model offers a more operational and realistic approach to bridging religious and scientific reasoning. The implications of this study highlight the importance of reorienting Islamic education toward an epistemological integration that is dialogical, reflective, and contextual, to produce graduates who balance scientific competence with Islamic values.

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INTRODUCTION

The dichotomy between religious knowledge and modern science is an issue frequently discussed in Islamic education studies, both at the international and national levels. A number of Islamic education thinkers argue that this separation has created an epistemological gap that has led to weak integration of religious values with the development of science and technology in the Muslim world (Al Faruqi, 1989; Al-Attas (Syed.), 1984; Muslih et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, the problem of the dichotomy of knowledge is also reflected in educational practices that still strictly separate religious disciplines from general sciences, thereby hindering the formation of a holistic and integrative scientific paradigm (Abdullah, 2006). Various studies indicate that the segregation between religious studies positioned as a normative-sacred domain and general sciences viewed as empirical-dynamic leads to the fragmentation of students' thinking and a lack of integration between religious values and scientific competencies (*split personality*) (Ahmad & Ningsih, 2025; Qadariyah, 2026; Suswanto et al., 2025). These findings align with the study by Wafa and Hadi (2020), which revealed that the dichotomy of knowledge contributes to the lag of the Muslim community in the fields of science and technology due to the development of the view that general science is separate from divine values—a condition that differs from the integrative nature of classical Islamic civilization (Ahwan & Karfida, 2025; Asman et al., 2021; Astalini et al., 2023; Badrudin et al., 2025).

The issue of the scientific dichotomy in Islamic education has also received attention in recent studies that emphasize the importance of an integrative approach responsive to the changing times (Amin et al., 2025; Cholid et al., 2026). (Hakim, 2020; Khoirin & Hamami, 2021) assert that Islamic Religious Education not grounded in an epistemological framework of integration risks losing its relevance in the digital age, as the separation of religious knowledge and general knowledge actually weakens critical thinking and the contextual nature of learning. This finding reinforces the argument that academic integration should not merely be understood as a curricular agenda, but rather as a fundamental necessity in cultivating students' reasoning abilities capable of bridging Islamic values and empirical reality (Istiyani et al., 2024; Juwaini et al., 2025; Shaukat et al., 2024).

Starting from this fundamental problem, the transformation of State Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) in Indonesia from institutes to universities can be interpreted as an ontological effort to reunite the fragmented pieces of knowledge. In this context, the State Islamic University Sunan Ampel Surabaya (UINSA) offers a distinctive response through the *Integrated Twin Towers* paradigm. Nur Syam (2016), the architect of this paradigm, emphasizes that the Twin Towers model does not seek to merge knowledge or Islamize specific disciplines, but rather positions religious studies and science within two towers of equal standing that engage with one another. Thus, each discipline continues to develop according to its methodological autonomy, yet remains functionally connected within an integrative scientific framework. This view is reinforced by Akh. Muzakki, as cited in Putra et al. (2025), who states that scientific integration is aimed at fostering an academic character that is *Smart, Pious, and Honourable*—as an antithesis to the figure of a secular scientist or a religious scholar who is unresponsive to social reality (Aris et al., 2022).

A number of previous studies have examined the Twin Towers model of scientific integration from various perspectives. (Aris et al., 2022; Hidayat, 2024), for example, conducted a comparative study highlighting the philosophical differences between the Twin Towers model at UIN Surabaya, the Tree of Knowledge model at UIN Malang, and the Spider Web

model at UIN Yogyakarta. Meanwhile, Jariyah et al. (2025) focused their study on the effectiveness of implementing the Twin Towers model in output-based *learning*, and Diana et al. (2024) examined aspects of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum policy within the framework of disciplinary integration. Nevertheless, a significant research gap remains, as most previous studies have tended to focus on macro-level conceptual comparisons or partial implementation in the classroom. Literature specifically analyzing the latest academic document—namely *the Twin Towers Interdisciplinary Integration Textbook* (2025)—remains very limited, even though this document marks a crucial paradigm shift from the “Islamization of Science” approach toward “Islamization of Reason,” accompanied by more concrete operational strategies.

Given this gap, this study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the mechanism of “Islamization of Reason” as formulated in the latest edition of *the Twin Towers Textbook on Interdisciplinary Integration* (Fauzi et al., 2025), using the *Double Movement* hermeneutic theoretical framework. This study is grounded in the argument that the Twin Towers model offers a more realistic approach compared to al-Faruqi’s concept of the Islamization of Science, as it does not alter the epistemic structure of science as the object of study, but rather reconstructs the students’ mindset through a dialectical movement between revelatory texts and the context of empirical reality (Pranita et al., 2025). This approach is considered relevant to fill a methodological gap in the discourse on integrative education, which has often remained at the philosophical level without clear operational guidance.

In line with this objective, the focus of this study is directed toward a descriptive-analytical examination of the conceptualization of the Twin Towers model of integrative education in the latest 2025 curriculum document of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Specifically, this study highlights how the *Double Movement* strategy and *experiential learning* are operationalized to bridge religious and scientific reasoning in an effort to foster holistic student competencies.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using *library research* combined with *document analysis*. This approach was chosen because the research focus is directed toward a conceptual and methodological examination of the scientific integration of the *Integrated Twin Towers* model, particularly the paradigm shift from the Islamization of Science toward the Islamization of Reason as formulated in the official academic documents of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. The primary data source for this study is *the UINSA Twin Towers Academic Integration Textbook* for the year 2025, which is used as a required textbook for university courses, while the secondary data sources consist of journal articles and relevant scholarly works published in the last five years (2021–2025) that discuss the dichotomy of knowledge, the integration of science and religion, and various models of scientific integration at State Islamic Religious Universities.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic review of the designated documents, focusing on the concept of the Islamization of Reason, the *Double Movement* hermeneutical mechanism, and operational strategies for integrating religious and scientific reasoning. The collected data were analyzed descriptively and analytically using *content analysis* techniques combined with a hermeneutic approach to interpret the relationship between normative texts and the empirical context of contemporary Islamic higher education. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation by comparing findings from the analysis of primary documents with relevant previous research results, ensuring that the research findings are

supported by adequate data and directly address the research focus and arguments formulated in the introduction.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

This section presents the research findings obtained through a document analysis of the 2025 *Twin Towers Interdisciplinary Integration Textbook* from UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya as the primary source, as well as a synthesis of fourteen previous research articles published over the past five years as secondary sources. The research results are organized thematically to illustrate conceptual and operational findings regarding the *Integrated Twin Towers* model of scientific integration, particularly concerning the paradigm shift from the Islamization of Science toward the Islamization of Reason, the *Double Movement* hermeneutical mechanism, and implementation strategies in learning. All findings presented in this section are the results of data-driven analysis that directly address the research focus and arguments as formulated in the introduction, without entering the interpretive realm that will be the focus of subsequent discussion.

Paradigm Shift in Scientific Integration: From the Islamization of Knowledge to the Islamization of Reason

The analysis results indicate that the *Integrated Twin Towers* paradigm formulated in the 2025 *Twin Towers Interdisciplinary Integration Textbook* of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya represents a fundamental shift in the approach to interdisciplinary integration at Islamic Higher Education Institutions. Integration is no longer understood as an effort to Islamize the structure of academic disciplines or to merge the methodologies of science and religion, but rather as a reconstruction of the way academic subjects think through the approach of the Islamization of Reason (Syam, 2016; Fauzi et al., 2025). Within this framework, religious studies and general sciences are positioned as two academic entities of *equal standing*, each possessing methodological autonomy yet functionally interconnected in establishing the ethical and epistemological orientation of scholarship (Syam, 2016).

Operationalizing the Islamization of Reason through Double Movement Hermeneutics Research findings indicate that the Islamization of Reason in the Twin Towers model is operationalized through the use of *Double Movement* hermeneutics. This strategy dialectically connects revelatory texts and the context of empirical reality through a repetitive process, namely the derivation of normative values from the text to the contemporary social context, and then back to the formulation of relevant and applicable Islamic principles (Fauzi et al., 2025). These findings indicate that scientific integration in the Twin Towers model does not stop at the philosophical level but is complemented by a methodological framework that enables religious values to serve as the foundation of critical reasoning in understanding and developing knowledge in Islamic higher education.

Strengthening Scientific Integration through Experiential Learning The analysis also indicates that the integration of religious and scientific reasoning in the Twin Towers model is strengthened through the application of *experiential learning*. This approach encourages students to internalize the concept of scientific integration through reflection on learning experiences, analysis of real-world cases, and critical responses to empirical problems

encountered in social life and the scientific world (Putra et al., 2025). Thus, scientific integration is not positioned as a normative doctrine, but rather as a process of forming a reflective and ethical mindset that simultaneously links academic, moral, and social dimensions.

Synthesis of Previous Research Findings on Academic Integration at PTKIN Based on a synthesis of fourteen previous research articles published over the past five years (2021–2025), it was found that studies on academic integration at PTKIN generally still focus on conceptual, symbolic, and institutional policy aspects. A number of studies highlight integration models such as the Tree of Knowledge at UIN Malang, the Spider Web at UIN Yogyakarta, and the implementation of the Twin Towers framework within the curriculum and policies of Islamic Religious Education; but most of these studies have not discussed in depth the operational mechanisms of integration at the level of reconstructing students' academic reasoning .

Position of Research Findings Regarding the Limitations of Previous Studies

Previous research that critiques the dichotomy of knowledge in Islamic education emphasizes the urgency of integrating religious knowledge and science, yet the solutions offered generally remain at the normative and declarative levels (Hadi, 2021; Suparjo et al., 2021). Even in studies discussing the integration of Islamic Education (PAI) and science in contemporary learning, integration is more often understood as content enrichment or a multidisciplinary approach, rather than as a systematic strategy for fostering students' epistemic reasoning (Pranita et al., 2025). In contrast to this trend, the findings of this study indicate that the latest version of the Twin Towers model from UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya offers a more operational and realistic approach by positioning the Islamization of Reason as the core of scientific integration capable of bridging religious and scientific reasoning through dialogue (Fauzi et al., 2025; Wafa & Hadi, 2020).

Discussion

This discussion stems from the research objectives that highlight the problem of the religion-science dichotomy in Islamic education and the need for a more substantial paradigm of scientific integration, particularly within the context of PTKIN (Amin, 2014; Hidayat, 2021). Based on the research findings , it is evident that the dominant scientific integration approach—particularly the Islamization of science—has not fully addressed the epistemological roots underlying this dichotomy (Saeed, 2005). This finding indicates that the issue of scientific integration cannot be reduced to a matter of curriculum or teaching methods alone, but is closely related to the ways of thinking and the frameworks of reasoning that shape the production of knowledge (A. M. Ismatulloh1*, 2025; Habibi, 2024).

The research results indicate a paradigm shift in scientific integration from the Islamization of science toward the Islamization of reasoning. This shift can be understood as a form of dissatisfaction with the Islamization of science approach, which tends to be normative and symbolic (Amin, 2014). Several studies emphasize that the Islamization of science often stops at religious labeling of modern science without unpacking the epistemological assumptions underlying it (Nasr, 2007; Hidayat, 2021). In this context, this study posits that sustainable scientific integration demands a change in the way of reasoning, not merely the incorporation of Islamic content or terminology (Al-Attas, 1993; Solihin, 2025).

The Islamization of reasoning in this study is understood as an effort to situate scientific reasoning within the horizon of Tawhidic values and consciousness, without negating rationality and the empirical approach (Amin, 2014). This perspective aligns with critiques in contemporary philosophy of science that assert that science is never entirely neutral or value-free (Kuhn, 1996). Thus, the Islamization of reason can be understood as an effort to bridge the relationship between science, values, and meaning, which have often been separated in Islamic educational practice (Armizi et al., 2025; Chande, 2023).

Furthermore, the research findings indicate that the Islamization of reason can be operationalized through the *double-movement* hermeneutics approach. This approach facilitates a dynamic dialogue between religious texts and social contexts, ensuring that the integration of religion and science avoids being trapped in either rigid or relativistic understandings (Hayadin et al., 2025; R. Lukens-Bull, 2024; Othman & Yaakub, 2025). Previous studies have emphasized that contextual hermeneutics plays a crucial role in the development of Islamic scholarship in higher education, although it has not yet been explicitly linked to the concept of the Islamization of reason (Muslih et al., 2024; Sardar & Henzell-Thomas, 2017).

The findings of this study align with the research by (R. A. Lukens-Bull, 2025), which emphasizes that integrative Islamic education demands a shift in scientific thinking, not merely the addition of religious content within the learning structure. The integrative perspective they developed—drawing from Gus Dur’s thought—shows that the integration of religion and science must proceed simultaneously at the epistemological and practical levels. This reinforces this study’s argument that the Islamization of reason is the core of sustainable scientific integration, and this study seeks to bridge these conceptual and methodological domains.

However, a shift in the epistemological paradigm will not have a significant impact unless it is accompanied by changes in educational practice. Research findings indicate that experience-based learning is a relevant approach for strengthening scientific integration (Buchmann & Schwille, 1983; Dewey, 2008). Through direct experience and critical reflection, students not only understand scientific concepts theoretically but also learn to connect Islamic values with scientific reasoning in a more concrete way (Faisal et al., 2024; “Problem-Based Learning as a Pedagogical Innovation for Transforming Higher Education Students’ Islamic Religious Comprehension,” 2025). These findings demonstrate that scientific integration cannot be built solely at the level of discourse or conceptual formulations but must be concretely embodied in daily learning practices.

At the institutional practice level, these research findings are further supported by the study by Fuadiy and Fahrur Rizal (2023), which indicates that the success of integrating Islamic values into education is significantly influenced by the consistency of the vision, policies, and learning strategies implemented by educational institutions. Although that study focused on the madrasah context, these findings are relevant for understanding that the integration of knowledge cannot be separated from actual educational practices, so that the transformation of reasoning must go hand in hand with institutional policies.

A synthesis of previous research on interdisciplinary integration at PTKINs indicates that most studies still focus on integration at the structural and institutional levels, such as curriculum design and institutional vision (Azra, 2006, 2019). The model of interdisciplinary integration within PTKINs through the Twin Towers paradigm emphasizes the integration of

Islamic studies and general sciences as a single epistemological unity, as formulated in the interdisciplinary integration textbook of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya (Fauzi et al., 2025). Although this approach has made significant contributions, this study indicates that without a shift in the academic mindset of faculty and students, scientific integration risks remaining merely an administrative project. In this regard, this study does not entirely contradict previous studies but places a different emphasis, particularly on the epistemological and pedagogical dimensions (Azhar, 2017).

Compared to previous research, the main contribution of this study lies in a clearer distinction between symbolic integration and epistemological integration. While some previous studies tended to emphasize the importance of integration in a normative sense, this study instead positions reasoning as the key to interdisciplinary integration (Nasr, 2007; Saeed, 2006). At this point, the researcher argues that scientific integration cannot be achieved without a reconstruction of the thinking paradigm underpinning academic practice (Al-Barakat et al., 2025; Beaumont, 2025).

More broadly, the implications of this study's findings call for a reorientation of Islamic education toward a scientific paradigm that is dialogical, reflective, and grounded in the unity of knowledge and values (Badawi, 2025; Mustapha, 2026). Future research could focus on empirical studies of how the Islamization of reason is internalized in teaching, faculty training, and academic culture at PTKINs, as well as how this approach influences how students understand the relationship between religion and science.

CONCLUSION

The most significant and unexpected finding of this study lies in the realization that the widely promoted approach of Islamization of knowledge has not fully resolved the epistemological dichotomy in Islamic education. While it has been considered a progressive framework, the analysis reveals that it often remains at a symbolic or structural level, without fundamentally transforming the way knowledge is constructed and understood. This study demonstrates that the core issue is not merely the absence of integration efforts, but rather the lack of epistemic transformation in academic reasoning. The emergence of the Islamization of reason as emphasized in the Twin Towers paradigm highlights a deeper and more essential shift—one that could only be clearly identified through a systematic and comprehensive analysis of recent academic developments.

From a scientific perspective, this study contributes by offering a distinct epistemological position that goes beyond previous integration models. Rather than simply confirming earlier findings on the importance of integrating religion and science, this research critically challenges the limitations of prior approaches that tend to focus on curriculum design or institutional frameworks. It introduces a new perspective by positioning the Islamization of reason as the central axis of knowledge integration, supported by the operational framework of double movement hermeneutics and experiential learning. In doing so, the study provides both conceptual and methodological contributions, enriching the discourse on integrative Islamic education with a more practical and epistemically grounded approach.

However, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it relies primarily on library research and document analysis, without direct empirical validation in educational practice. Second, the scope of analysis is largely confined to the context of Islamic higher education institutions, particularly within PTKIN, which may not fully represent broader educational settings. Third, the study does not account for variations in educational actors, such as differences in lecturers, students, age, or academic backgrounds. These limitations suggest the need for further research that incorporates empirical methods, broader institutional contexts, and more diverse participant characteristics. Future studies are encouraged to explore how the Islamization of reason is implemented in real learning environments and how it influences students' epistemological development in a more comprehensive and measurable way.

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