



# The Sociological Approach in Qur'anic Interpretation: An Analysis of Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement Method

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## ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze the sociological approach in Qur'anic interpretation through the double movement method developed by Fazlur Rahman. The focus of the study is directed toward three main issues: first, the methodological framework of the double movement in the process of Qur'anic interpretation; second, the ways in which this method represents a sociological approach to the Qur'an; and third, the extent to which the double movement method is relevant for analyzing contemporary social problems. This research employs a qualitative approach with a library-based research design, using primary data from Fazlur Rahman's works and scholarly journal articles that discuss contextual and social approaches to Qur'anic interpretation. Data analysis is conducted through descriptive-analytical techniques and contextual hermeneutical analysis. The findings indicate that the double movement method has a systematic methodological framework, consisting of an interpretive movement from the socio-historical context of revelation toward the formulation of universal moral principles, followed by an applicative movement that projects these principles into contemporary social contexts. This method represents a sociological approach to the Qur'an by emphasizing the analysis of social realities as a fundamental basis for understanding the text, thereby positioning the Qur'an as a revelation that actively engages with human social problems. Furthermore, the double movement method is highly relevant for analyzing various modern social issues, such as social justice, pluralism, gender relations, and public ethics, as it effectively bridges the normative values of the Qur'an with the dynamics of modern society..

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of Qur'anic exegesis has entered a new phase marked by the growing use of various approaches that seek to bridge the revealed text with contemporary social realities. Traditional approaches that primarily emphasize textual aspects are often considered insufficient to address modern social issues

such as tolerance, gender relations, social justice, and societal plurality. One of the main challenges in contemporary Qur'anic interpretation is how to read the Qur'an contextually and sociologically relevantly without neglecting the normative essence of the revealed text itself.

In this context, Fazlur Rahman emerges as one of the modern Islamic thinkers who offers a strong methodological framework through his double movement method. This method serves as a fundamental foundation for contextual interpretation, as it places socio-historical analysis of the revelation's context at the core of interpretation, followed by the formulation of universal moral principles that can be applied to contemporary social problems. Recent studies indicate that the double movement method was developed by Rahman as a way to interpret Qur'anic texts from the original context of revelation to their application in modern realities, thereby making a significant contribution to sociologically relevant Qur'anic exegesis (the contribution of the double movement method) (Sulkifli & Nurul Hikmah Amir, 2023).

According to scholarly journal studies, the double movement method begins with a socio-historical analysis of the social conditions of Arab society at the time of revelation. This is followed by the formulation of ideal moral values derived from the text, which are then contextualized within modern social realities. This process demonstrates that Qur'anic interpretation is not merely an exercise in literal textual understanding, but also an effort to grasp the universal and applicable moral objectives of revelation within contemporary social contexts (double movement theory) (Priyantika et al., 2024).

This approach aligns with the argument that Qur'anic exegesis relying solely on classical textual methodologies often lacks sensitivity to social change, as it tends to overlook the historical and sociological dimensions of revelation, which are crucial sources of the Qur'an's moral and social meanings (historical-sociological approach in Qur'anic studies) (Anisatul Fikriyah & Ansharuddin, 2022).

Several contemporary case studies in Qur'anic interpretation journals further demonstrate that the double movement methodology can be employed to explain modern social phenomena, such as religious tolerance in Qur'anic verses that were previously interpreted in a partial manner without sufficient attention to their socio-historical contexts (exploring religious tolerance in the Qur'an) (Nur Hasanah et al., 2024), as well as addressing the phenomenon of "brain rot" in the digital era through an analysis of Surah al-'Asr from the perspective of the double movement theory (Surah al-'Asr in the perspective of the double movement theory) (Hazmi, 2025).

Based on these findings, this article aims to analyze Fazlur Rahman's double movement method from the perspective of a sociological approach to Qur'anic interpretation, particularly in terms of how this method enables a reading of the Qur'an that effectively responds to contemporary social problems. This study also seeks to affirm that the double movement method is not merely a textual hermeneutic approach, but rather a sociological strategy in Qur'anic

exegesis that comprehensively connects the historical context of revelation with present-day social realities.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research method with a library research approach as the primary strategy to analyze Fazlur Rahman's double movement method within the framework of a sociological approach to Qur'anic interpretation. The qualitative method is selected because the research is analytical and descriptive in nature and does not involve the collection of primary field data. Instead, it focuses on examining relevant primary and secondary scholarly works.

This qualitative research relies on a literature review of primary sources, namely Fazlur Rahman's writings, as well as secondary sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books related to the double movement method and contextual Qur'anic interpretation. Data were collected through a systematic and selective review of academic literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs on Rahman's thought, and methodological studies on sociological approaches in Qur'anic exegesis.

Furthermore, data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis by identifying and examining conceptual themes related to the double movement process, the sociological components of the method, and its contextual implications for contemporary Qur'anic studies. This analysis was carried out through a descriptive-analytical approach, critically examining methodological arguments found in the literature and interpreting the relationship between the double movement method and sociological approaches to Qur'anic interpretation.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

#### **The Fundamental Concept of Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement Method**

The double movement method formulated by Fazlur Rahman constitutes a central pillar of contextual Qur'anic interpretation, as it emphasizes that understanding the Qur'an cannot be separated from its historical context and social realities, while at the same time aiming to produce universal moral values applicable to contemporary society.

#### **1. Definition and Basic Structure**

The double movement method consists of two interconnected hermeneutical movements (Rudy Irawan, 2023):

##### **First Movement – Historical Analysis:**

In this movement, the interpreter examines the socio-historical conditions at the time of revelation by exploring the social, cultural, and communal problems that formed the context of the Qur'anic verses. Through this approach, interpretation is grounded in historical situations and the circumstances of

revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), ensuring that meaning is not treated as static but as a response to real social problems during the period of revelation. This stage represents the initial step in identifying the ideal moral values that emerged as responses to concrete historical circumstances.

#### Second Movement – Contemporary Application:

After extracting moral values from the text through historical analysis, the next step involves applying these values within modern social contexts. This movement bridges the ideal values identified in the first movement with contemporary social issues, ensuring that the Qur'anic message remains relevant to the dynamics of present-day society. Methodologically, the double movement represents a synthesis of historical understanding and practical application, aiming to avoid rigid, purely textual interpretations that are insufficient to respond to social change.

### 2. Hermeneutical–Sociological Characteristics of the Double Movement Method

Several studies suggest that the double movement method represents a form of Qur'anic hermeneutics that positions text and context as two essential poles of interpretation. Interpretation does not merely focus on the revealed text but is also understood as a moral response to specific historical conditions.

Consequently, Qur'anic exegesis becomes not only scholarly but also ethical and sociological in nature (Sulkifli & Nurul Hikmah Amir, 2023). In various academic studies, the double movement is viewed as a methodological tool for integrating the normative nature of the Qur'anic text with the social realities of contemporary Muslim communities. This method is not simply a textual reading technique, but rather a strategy for situating the text within its historical context of revelation, extracting universal moral values, and subsequently applying these values to modern social realities. As a result, Qur'anic interpretation becomes both applicable and transformative (Sulkifli & Nurul Hikmah Amir, 2023).

As an illustration, the double movement method has been applied in studies of Qur'anic verses addressing religious tolerance. In such research, interpretations of verses such as Q.S. *al-Mumtahanah* [60]:8 and Q.S. *al-Hujurat* [49]:13 begin with an exploration of their socio-historical contexts, followed by the formulation of moral values and their application to contemporary social contexts. This demonstrates how the method effectively bridges the Qur'anic text with modern realities (Nur Hasanah et al., 2024).

### **The Sociological Dimension of Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement Method**

Fazlur Rahman's double movement method is not merely a textual hermeneutical technique but also possesses a strong sociological dimension aimed at bridging the socio-historical context of revelation with contemporary social realities. This dimension emerges from Rahman's emphasis on

understanding the social conditions of pre-Islamic Arab society as an integral component of interpretation, followed by the formulation of moral values relevant to present social structures.

1. Emphasis on Historical Social Context as the Starting Point

The first sociological dimension of the double movement lies in its attention to social structures at the time of revelation, including customs, social norms, power relations, and societal organization in the era of the Prophet Muhammad. By understanding these social factors, interpreters can identify the social function of revelation as a response to specific historical problems rather than viewing it as a static religious text. This approach establishes pre-Islamic social reality as a methodological prerequisite for formulating universal moral values (Aprilianti & Ansharuddin, 2022).

2. Identification of Moral Values as Social Adaptation

Following the historical phase, the double movement identifies ideal moral values derived from Qur'anic verses within their socio-historical contexts. These values are then detached from their original context and reintegrated into contemporary social realities. This approach enables interpretation to remain dynamic and sociologically relevant, capable of addressing modern issues such as tolerance, social justice, and intercommunal relations (Nur Hasanah et al., 2024).

3. Text-Context Relationship as a Social Interaction

A crucial sociological aspect of the double movement is its refusal to separate the revealed text from its socio-historical and cultural context. Rahman argues that the meaning of Qur'anic verses emerges from the interaction between revelation and the social circumstances in which it was revealed. Thus, interpretation becomes a social act that considers the social implications and consequences of interpretation. This hermeneutical approach reflects a form of sociological imagination in religious studies, linking textual meaning with the lived social conditions of believers (Sulkifli & Nurul Hikmah Amir, 2023).

4. Application of Universal Moral Values in Social Transformation

The sociological dimension is further evident in the application of formulated moral values to contemporary social contexts. These values function as mechanisms for social transformation, positioning Qur'anic interpretation not merely as textual explanation but as an instrument of social reform and public ethics. In this way, the Qur'an becomes relevant to modern social challenges such as pluralism, equality, and social harmony (Susanti Vera & Fuad Hilmi, 2021).

## Methodological Implications for Qur'anic Interpretation

The application of Fazlur Rahman's double movement method generates several significant methodological implications for the development of contemporary Qur'anic exegesis. These implications affect not only interpretative techniques but also the epistemological and sociological frameworks through which revelation is understood and applied today.

1. Interpretation Oriented toward Social Context and Universal Moral Values

The double movement method shifts the focus of interpretation from literal meaning or traditional juridical analysis toward the exploration of universal moral values that are contextual and applicable. The first stage examines the socio-historical background of Qur'anic verses, while the second stage synthesizes these values with contemporary realities, rendering interpretation sociologically grounded and socially relevant (Luluk Indah Kholifatin, 2025).

2. Textual Interpretation as Historical-Social Analysis

One major implication is that understanding the Qur'an is no longer approached atomistically or purely text-centrally, but rather through a historical-social framework that underlies revelation. Rahman emphasizes that interpretation must begin with the social realities at the time of revelation before formulating universal moral principles. In this way, interpretation becomes a dialogue between text and social context, reinforcing its sociological and historical character (Rudy Irawan, 2019).

3. Qur'anic Interpretation as an Instrument of Social and Ethical Transformation

The double movement method does not treat the Qur'an merely as a historical document but connects Qur'anic moral values with contemporary ethical challenges. This transforms interpretation into a tool for social change and moral development, enabling Qur'anic values to address modern ethical issues such as tolerance, inclusivity, and justice (Susanti Vera & Fuad Hilmi, 2025).

4. Strengthening Contextual Hermeneutics as an Academic Framework

Another methodological implication is the strengthening of contextual hermeneutics as a legitimate academic approach in Qur'anic studies. In contemporary scholarship, the double movement is positioned as a hermeneutical strategy capable of explaining the relevance of Qur'anic verses to present-day issues without abandoning the normative framework of religion. This perspective significantly influences how scholars design systematic and critical research in modern Qur'anic interpretation (Khairul Hamim, 2022).

## Discussion

### The Position of the Double Movement Method in the Tradition of Social Qur'anic Interpretation

Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement method occupies a significant

position in the tradition of modern social Qur'anic interpretation, as it integrates a historical–social understanding of the context of revelation with the application of universal moral values to contemporary social realities. This methodological stance contributes to the development of social exegesis as an academic discipline that avoids being confined to purely textual approaches while maintaining the relevance of Qur'anic values within the dynamics of modern society (Sulkifli & Nurul Hikmah Amir, 2023).

First, the Double Movement method transcends classical interpretations that tend to emphasize ritual and implicit legal aspects without systematically integrating socio-historical contexts. In classical exegetical traditions, historical context is often treated descriptively or merely as background information through *asbāb al-nuzūl*, rather than serving as the primary framework for constructing applicable moral values. Rahman offers a paradigmatic shift: interpretation begins with reconstructing the social context of the Prophet's era and subsequently projects ideal moral values onto the challenges of modern society (Sulkifli & Nurul Hikmah Amir, 2023).

Second, methodologically, the Double Movement strengthens the dialogue between text and society, which is a defining characteristic of social Qur'anic interpretation. Within contemporary social exegesis, understanding Qur'anic verses does not end at the lexical or syntactical level but must include an interpretation of the social function of revelation. Contemporary studies demonstrate that the application of the Double Movement method to social issues such as religious tolerance yields a more comprehensive interpretation of Qur'anic messages of pluralism—dimensions that were often underrepresented in classical normative interpretations (Nur Hasanah et al., 2024).

Moreover, the Double Movement marks an epistemological shift in the tradition of social Qur'anic interpretation by positioning universal moral values as the meeting point between historical context and contemporary social realities. Interpretation under this approach is not limited to uncovering the original meaning of the text but aims to formulate moral principles that function as ethical guidelines for modern society. Consequently, Qur'anic interpretation becomes an effective instrument of social transformation. This approach is explicitly more sociological than hermeneutical approaches that focus solely on linguistic meaning or classical legal reasoning (Rudy Irawan, 2019).

Furthermore, the Double Movement serves as a foundation for the further development of social exegetical theory in contemporary Qur'anic studies. The method has been widely applied in empirical studies to explain the relevance of Qur'anic verses to modern social issues such as gender justice, religious tolerance, and the construction of social ethics. These applications demonstrate that the Double Movement has become a key methodological reference across various contexts of social interpretation within academic discourse (Nafilah Sulfa & Delta Yaumin Nahri, 2023).

Thus, the position of the Double Movement method in the tradition of social Qur'anic interpretation can be understood as a moderate hermeneutical

framework that connects the historical context of revelation with social moral values. It positions the Qur'an not merely as a static textual document but as a living text that remains relevant to social dynamics across time—a methodological contribution that reinforces the role of social exegesis in responding to contemporary challenges in a scholarly and contextual manner.

### **The Relevance of Fazlur Rahman's Sociological Approach**

The sociological approach formulated by Fazlur Rahman through the Double Movement method remains highly relevant in contemporary Qur'anic interpretation, as it provides an interpretive framework capable of bridging the historical social realities of revelation with modern social challenges. Epistemologically and methodologically, this approach shifts Qur'anic interpretation from a textual-legalistic tradition toward one that accounts for socio-cultural context, historical background, and universal moral values that are applicable to contemporary life. As such, interpretation is no longer understood as a purely philological activity but as an intellectual endeavor responsive to the social dynamics of contemporary Muslim societies (Sulkifli & Nurul Hikmah Amir, 2023).

First, the relevance of Rahman's sociological approach is evident in his understanding of the Qur'an as a text that actively interacted with the social conditions of Arab society at the time of revelation. Rahman emphasizes that attention to socio-historical context is an indispensable starting point, as it is this context that provides the moral meaning of the Qur'anic response to social issues of the time. This perspective opens space for a more dynamic interpretation of diverse social realities, rather than a purely literal reading detached from the social background of revelation (Rudy Irawan, 2019).

Second, the methodological relevance of this approach is further demonstrated by its capacity to address contemporary issues that did not exist during the classical exegetical period. Studies applying the Double Movement method to issues of religious tolerance illustrate its effectiveness in producing interpretations that are sensitive to present-day social contexts while remaining grounded in Qur'anic moral and ethical values. In this way, Rahman's approach contributes substantively to the development of contextual and inclusive social Qur'anic interpretation (Nur Hasanah et al., 2024).

Additionally, contemporary hermeneutical studies argue that Rahman's Double Movement provides a broader and more flexible epistemological foundation, as the method does not merely explain the text but affirms its relevance to socio-cultural conditions and contemporary challenges. Through this approach, Qur'anic interpretation can function as an instrument of social transformation and public ethics within increasingly complex Muslim societies (Rahmawati & Muhtolib, 2024).

Furthermore, studies on Rahman's contextual exegesis demonstrate that his sociological approach is capable of formulating universal moral principles that are not only relevant to the historical context of revelation but also adaptable

to modern social challenges such as social justice, pluralism, and interreligious relations. These implications indicate that Rahman's approach is not only academically relevant but also influential in shaping social awareness and moral values among contemporary Muslims (Luluk Indah Kholifatin, 2025).

Taken together, Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement method remains a relevant methodological foundation for the development of social Qur'anic interpretation in modern Islamic studies, serving as a bridge between textual tradition and the demands of contemporary social realities.

## CONCLUSION

This study affirms that Fazlur Rahman's double movement method constitutes a systematic and coherent methodological framework for reading the Qur'an contextually by grounding interpretation in social realities. The method is constructed upon two interrelated interpretive movements: first, a historical-sociological movement from the social context of revelation toward the formulation of Qur'anic moral principles; second, an applicative movement from these universal moral principles toward contemporary social contexts. This framework demonstrates that Qur'anic interpretation does not stop at understanding the literal meaning of verses but is directed toward uncovering the ethical and social objectives of revelation that transcend historical boundaries.

In terms of representing a sociological approach, the double movement positions social context as a primary epistemological element in the interpretive process. The method reflects a sociological approach to the Qur'an by emphasizing the analysis of social conditions, societal structures, and human problems that formed the background of Qur'anic revelation. Accordingly, the Qur'an is understood as a text that engages in dialogue with specific social realities while simultaneously offering moral values intended to shape a more just and humane social order. This approach maintains a balance between the normative dimension of revelation and social dynamics, thereby preserving theological legitimacy alongside social relevance.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the double movement method possesses a high degree of relevance for analyzing contemporary social problems. Its capacity to extract universal moral principles from the early historical context of Islam enables the Qur'an to be read constructively in responding to modern issues such as social justice, pluralism, gender relations, and public ethics. With its moderate and flexible methodological character, the double movement functions not only as an approach to contextual Qur'anic interpretation but also as a tool of social analysis capable of bridging revealed texts with the challenges of the modern world.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that Fazlur Rahman's double movement method occupies a strategic position in the development of contemporary social Qur'anic interpretation. The method makes a significant contribution to expanding the methodological horizons of Qur'anic studies by

offering an approach that is morally oriented, socially sensitive, and relevant to processes of social transformation. Therefore, the double movement deserves consideration as one of the principal methodological frameworks in Qur'anic studies that seek to address humanitarian and social challenges in the modern era.

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