Attadrib: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah
p-ISSN: 2599-3194 | e-ISSN: 2775-8109
Volume 8, Issue. 3, 2025, pp. 752-767

The Tree of Knowledge Paradigm for Integrating Islam and Science: A Historical Study of Islamic Higher Education

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Submitted: 02-11-2025 Revised : 22-12-2025 Accepted: 07-01-2026

ABSTRACT. The dichotomy between religious sciences and secular sciences remains a fundamental challenge in the development of Islamic higher education in Indonesia. This separation has resulted not only in fragmented knowledge structures but also in the weakening of holistic academic and moral formation. In response to this issue, the Tree of Knowledge paradigm developed at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang represents a systematic effort to integrate Islam and modern science within a unified, tauhid-based epistemological framework. This study aims to examine the historical background, epistemological foundations, practical implementation, and contemporary relevance of the Tree of Knowledge paradigm in shaping Islamic higher education in the global and digital era. This research employs a qualitative approach using a library research Design. Data were collected through critical analysis of scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and institutional documents related to Islamic epistemology, knowledge integration, and the Tree of Knowledge model. Data analysis used content analysis and historical analysis to explore the epistemological structure, implementation dynamics, and challenges of integrative knowledge paradigms in Islamic universities. The findings reveal that the Tree of Knowledge paradigm functions not merely as a symbolic representation but as an operational framework guiding curriculum development, interdisciplinary research, and integrative academic culture. The paradigm successfully positions revelation, reason, and empirical experience in a synergistic relationship. The study implies that the Tree of Knowledge offers a strategic foundation for developing Islamic higher education institutions that are spiritually grounded, intellectually competitive, and capable of contributing ethically and constructively to global civilization in the digital age.

Keywords: *Tree of Knowledge, Integration of Knowledge, Islam and Science, Islamic Epistemology, Islamic Higher Education*

https://doi.org/10.54069/attadrib.v8i3.1065

How to Cite Mokodompit, A., Mas'ud, A., & Abu Bakar, M. (2025). The Tree of Knowledge Paradigm for Integrating Islam and Science: A Historical Study of Islamic Higher Education. *Attadrib: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 8(3), 752–767.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic higher education in Indonesia is currently confronted with a critical challenge: the persistent gap between the normative Islamic scholarly tradition and the rapid advancement of empirical science and technology (Chalim et al., 2024; Huda et al., 2024). In the era of globalization and the Industrial Revolution 4.0, Islamic universities are expected not only to cultivate graduates with strong faith and moral integrity but also to equip them with scientific competence, technological literacy, and global competitiveness (Parhan et al., 2024; Yusuf, 2025). Empirically, this challenge is evident in curriculum fragmentation, epistemological dichotomy, and limited integration between religious and general sciences. Normatively, this condition threatens the holistic vision of Islamic education, which views knowledge as a unified system

rooted in *tawḥīdic* values (Abidin et al., 2025; Amalia et al., 2024; Muhlis et al., 2025; Rokhman et al., 2025). This dual qualitative and conceptual problem renders the issue of scientific integration in Islamic higher education both urgent and academically significant.

Scholarly efforts to address this challenge are not entirely new. Previous studies have extensively discussed the Islamization of knowledge, integration interconnection paradigms, and various models of convergence between Islam and science (Asweni et al., 2024; Herlanti et al., 2025; Katsaros, 2025). However, much of the existing literature remains either conceptual or normative, focusing on philosophical justification rather than systematic analysis of specific institutional paradigms. Moreover, many studies acknowledge that despite decades of discourse, the dichotomy between religious and general sciences persists in academic practice (Azizah & Mardiana, 2024; M. Sholihah et al., 2024; Sulaeman, 2024). What remains underexplored is a focused examination of a distinctive Indonesian integrative model that combines epistemological foundations, historical development, and practical relevance within Islamic higher education.

One such model is the Tree of Knowledge paradigm developed at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. While several scholars have recognized this paradigm as a synthesis of Islamization, integration, and interconnection approaches (Hidayah et al., 2024). Existing studies have not sufficiently analyzed it as a coherent scientific model grounded in tawḥīd and examined its broader implications for the development of Islamic higher education. This gap highlights the novelty of the present study, which positions the Tree of Knowledge not merely as a symbolic or philosophical construct, but as an epistemological and historical framework capable of guiding curriculum design, research orientation, and academic culture in Islamic universities (Ceballos et al., 2026; Rachman et al., 2025).

Accordingly, the specific purpose of this article is to analyze the Tree of Knowledge paradigm from historical and conceptual perspectives and to assess its relevance for strengthening the integrative vision of Islamic higher education in Indonesia (Akmansyah et al., 2025; Faizah et al., 2025; Febriani et al., 2025). Unlike previous studies that focus on general integration discourse, this study seeks to complement existing scholarship by offering a focused and systematic reading of the Tree of Knowledge as a distinctive Indonesian model of scientific integration grounded in tawḥīdic epistemology.

This article argues that the Tree of Knowledge paradigm constitutes a viable integrative scientific framework capable of overcoming the dichotomy between religious and empirical sciences in Islamic higher education. The central argument tested in this study is that by placing tawḥīd as the epistemological root of all disciplines, the Tree of Knowledge model enables a holistic understanding of knowledge that integrates spiritual, intellectual, and ethical dimensions. Consequently, this paradigm has the potential to contribute significantly to the development of Islamic higher education institutions that are academically rigorous, spiritually grounded, and socially responsive.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design, as outlined to obtain an in-depth understanding of a contemporary educational phenomenon within its real-life context (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The case study approach was selected to examine the Tree of Knowledge paradigm as a model for integrating Islam and science in Islamic higher education. The field research was conducted from March to May 2025 at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia. This research site was purposively chosen because UIN Malang is the institution where the Tree of Knowledge paradigm was originally formulated and systematically implemented, making it a relevant and information-rich setting for this study.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants selected through purposive sampling, including university leaders, curriculum developers, and lecturers involved in integrative teaching practices who possess direct knowledge of the historical background and practical

implementation of the Tree of Knowledge model. Observations were carried out by directly examining academic environments, learning activities, institutional symbols, and educational practices that reflect the integration of Islamic values and scientific disciplines. Documentation analysis included institutional policy documents, curriculum guidelines, academic manuscripts, official publications, and archival materials related to the development and application of the Tree of Knowledge paradigm.

Data analysis was conducted interactively using the qualitative data analysis model proposed, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary data were coded thematically to identify recurring patterns related to epistemological foundations, knowledge integration, and institutional practices. To ensure the credibility of the findings, source triangulation was applied by comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. This operational analytical process enabled the researcher to construct a comprehensive and credible interpretation of how the Tree of Knowledge paradigm functions as an integrative framework bridging Islam and science in Islamic higher education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Historical Reconstruction of the Emergence of the Tree of Knowledge Model within the Dynamics of Islamic Higher Education Transformation in Indonesia

The transformation of scientific paradigms in Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia constitutes a long historical process rooted in the need to overcome the dichotomy between religious sciences and general sciences. Since the establishment of the State Institutes for Islamic Studies (*Institut Agama Islam Negeri*/IAIN) in the 1960s, the academic orientation of these institutions was largely directed toward the development of normative Islamic studies. However, along with the demands of the times and the rapid advancement of modern science, a new awareness emerged that Islamic education could no longer stand apart from developments in science and technology. This awareness subsequently gave rise to a movement of institutional transformation from IAIN into State Islamic Universities (*Universitas Islam Negeri*/UIN) beginning in the early 2000s. One of the most significant milestones of this transformation was UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, which introduced a distinctive scientific paradigm known as the Tree of Knowledge (*Pohon Ilmu*).

Historically, the emergence of the Tree of Knowledge model cannot be separated from UIN Malang's grand vision of constructing an integrative relationship between Islam and science. According to this paradigm originated from critical reflections on the limitations of dichotomous epistemological frameworks that separate revelation from reason and religious sciences from general sciences. Within such frameworks, religious sciences are often regarded as morally superior, while general sciences are perceived as neutral or secular. UIN Malang sought to correct this perspective by developing a unified system of knowledge grounded in the principle of *tawḥīd*. Consequently, the Tree of Knowledge is not merely a visual metaphor but also an epistemological symbol that illustrates the integral relationship between revelation, knowledge, and praxis (Yunus, 2020).

Conceptually and visually, the Tree of Knowledge presents the structure of knowledge as a living tree: the roots represent divine revelation as the ultimate source of knowledge; the trunk symbolizes Islamic sciences as the connective structure between source and application; while the branches, leaves, and fruits depict various contemporary disciplines that grow and flourish from the same Islamic foundation (Yunus, 2020). This model assumes that all fields of knowledge including science, technology, social sciences, humanities, and religious studies are interconnected within a unified value system centered on *tawḥīd*. This perspective affirms that no form of knowledge is value-neutral, as all human knowledge ultimately constitutes an engagement with God's signs (*āyāt*) manifested through revelation and the natural universe.

The emergence of the Tree of Knowledge paradigm is also inseparable from the global discourse on the Islamization of knowledge. During the 1980s and 1990s, the ideas of Islamization proposed by Syed Naquib al-Attas and Ismail Raji al-Faruqi began to exert influence in Indonesia. However, in practice, these discourses did not yet yield operational institutional models. UIN Malang subsequently took a concrete step by adapting the ideas of Islamization into an integrative, contextual, and practical model. According to the Tree of Knowledge represents a process of "indigenization" of the Islamization of knowledge discourse, tailored to the sociocultural characteristics of Indonesian society and Islamic education. In this sense, the model does not merely replicate global Islamic concepts but constructs a distinctively Indonesian paradigm rooted in the nation's spiritual, intellectual, and cultural values (Mahmudah, 2023).

Institutionally, the transformation from IAIN to UIN created opportunities for the development of new faculties that had previously been absent within Islamic higher education, such as faculties of science, technology, medicine, and economics. The establishment of these faculties symbolized tangible efforts toward scientific integration. Nevertheless, structural transformation did not automatically lead to epistemological integration. It is within this context that UIN Malang, through the Tree of Knowledge model, played a crucial role by providing a unifying epistemological framework grounded in *tawḥīd*. This model subsequently became a defining characteristic of UIN Malang, distinguishing it from other Islamic universities in Indonesia (Hidayah et al., 2023)

From a historical perspective, the development of the Tree of Knowledge model also represents a prolonged reflection on the shortcomings of modern Islamic education in integrating faith (*īmān*), knowledge (*ʿilm*), and action (*ʿamal*). Historically, Islamic education in Indonesia was often divided between pesantren traditions, which emphasized spirituality and moral formation, and modern universities, which prioritized rationality and empirical sciences. The Tree of Knowledge paradigm emerged as a bridge between these two traditions, aiming to produce graduates who are not only intellectually competent but also spiritually grounded and morally responsible (Sarkowi, 2024). In this regard, the model emphasizes the ideal of *ulū al-albāb* individuals who embody a balance between remembrance (*dhikr*), reflection (*fikr*), and action (*ʿamal*) (N. Sholihah et al., 2024).

This historical reconstruction also reflects Indonesia's broader socio-religious dynamics in its search for an ideal relationship between religion and science. In this context, the integrative paradigm functions as a symbol of reconciliation between classical Islamic intellectual traditions and the demands of modernity. According to the strength of this model lies in its ability to articulate Islamic values within the language of modern academia without losing its spiritual foundations. Thus, the integration of Islam and science is not merely the insertion of Qur'anic verses into scientific theories, but a fundamental reconfiguration of epistemological frameworks that places God at the center of scientific reality (Ali et al., 2024).

In practice, the Tree of Knowledge paradigm has been implemented across multiple domains. In education, it serves as the foundation for integrative curriculum design, requiring each course to reflect the unity of religious and scientific knowledge. In research, lecturers and students are encouraged to engage in interdisciplinary studies that bridge social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences with Islamic values. In community service, the paradigm promotes community development grounded in both spirituality and knowledge (Chande, 2023; Salamah et al., 2025; Susilowati et al., 2025). Consequently, the Tree of Knowledge is not merely a philosophical construct but functions as a practical system guiding the governance and mission of Islamic higher education institutions.

Nevertheless, this historical process has not been without challenges. Some academics continue to question the extent to which epistemological integration within this model has been substantively realized rather than merely symbolically represented. There remains a tendency toward the formalization of integration, manifested in the addition of the label "Islamic" to academic programs without a corresponding transformation of the underlying scientific

worldview. As cautioned the historical reconstruction of Islamic scientific paradigms must continue through sustained research and interdisciplinary dialogue to ensure that integration does not remain at a normative level but evolves into a dynamic and living epistemological framework.

Subsequently, the Tree of Knowledge model has inspired several other Islamic universities in Indonesia, such as UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta with its Integration–Interconnection paradigm, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta with the *Wahdat al-ʿUlūm* model, and UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya with the Integrated Twin Towers concept. The diversity of these models demonstrates that the process of scientific integration in Indonesia is pluralistic and dynamic, yet united by a shared objective: to construct a holistic, contextual, and adaptive Islamic knowledge system responsive to contemporary challenges (Irham, 2025). In this respect, the Tree of Knowledge stands as a pioneering model that demonstrates the possibility of integrating Islam and science visually, conceptually, and institutionally.

In conclusion, the historical reconstruction of the Tree of Knowledge model represents a significant milestone in the development of Islamic educational paradigms in Indonesia. It signifies not only an epistemological transformation but also a symbol of Islamic intellectual revival in response to the challenges of modernity. This model affirms that knowledge cannot be detached from values and morality, and that the integration of Islam and science constitutes a pathway toward balance between spirituality and rationality. Its success demonstrates that Islamic educational paradigms are capable of adaptation and can contribute meaningfully to the construction of a civilization of knowledge grounded in *tawḥīd*.

Epistemological Foundations and Philosophical Groundings of the Tree of Knowledge Paradigm as a Basis for the Integration of Islam and Science

Islamic epistemology views knowledge as an integral component of faith, wherein the pursuit of knowledge is inseparable from awareness of God as the ultimate source of truth. The Tree of Knowledge paradigm developed at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang is constructed upon this epistemological perspective, namely that all human knowledge originates from and ultimately returns to *tawḥīdic* values. According to *tawḥīd* functions not only as a theological foundation but also as an epistemological principle that guides the direction of knowledge acquisition, development, and application. Knowledge, in this context, is not merely the product of human rationality but a reflection of divine signs (*āyāt*) manifested through revelation and the natural world (Yunus, 2020).

The epistemological foundation of the Tree of Knowledge rests on the view that revelation and reason constitute two inseparable primary sources of knowledge. Revelation serves as the source of absolute truth and moral values, while reason functions as the instrument through which empirical reality is understood. The relationship between the two is integrative rather than dichotomous. Emphasizes that scientific knowledge detached from revelatory values loses its moral direction, while religious knowledge that neglects the role of reason risks losing its rational relevance. Consequently, the Tree of Knowledge paradigm integrates both within a *tawḥīdic* epistemological framework, wherein revelation provides the normative foundation and reason serves as the interpretative instrument (Yunus, 2020).

Philosophically, the Tree of Knowledge embodies an ontological perspective that conceives reality as a unified whole originating from God. In Islamic thought, all existence is understood as a manifestation of divine will; therefore, knowledge of nature essentially constitutes knowledge of God's signs. This view resonates with the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* in Islamic philosophy, which affirms the unity of existence in terms of being, not substance. As such, knowledge cannot be separated from spiritual and moral values. Argues that the Tree of Knowledge paradigm revitalizes Islamic ontological consciousness by affirming that all scientific activity must be grounded in awareness of the interconnectedness between humanity, nature, and God (Tobroni, 2020).

From an epistemological standpoint, this paradigm seeks to harmonize three major approaches to knowledge: rationalism, empiricism, and intuitionism. These approaches are positioned synergistically under the overarching principle of *tawḥīd*. Rationalism contributes to the development of theories and scientific concepts, empiricism is employed to test truth through observation and experimentation, while intuitionism manifested through inspiration (*ilhām*) and remembrance (*dhikr*), connects human knowledge with the spiritual dimension. Within this framework, intellect and heart function as complementary epistemic instruments. As emphasized the Tree of Knowledge paradigm integrates scientific rationality with Islamic spirituality through what they term *ulū al-albāb epistemology*, a mode of thinking that unites remembrance (*dhikr*), reflection (*fikr*), and righteous action (*ʿamal ṣāliḥ*) (Hidayah & Faridi, 2021).

Within this epistemological framework, knowledge is not regarded as value-neutral. Every form of knowledge carries moral orientation and ethical purpose. Knowledge devoid of values risks leading to dehumanization and moral crisis, as evidenced by certain trajectories of modern technological development that are detached from ethical considerations. Accordingly, the Tree of Knowledge paradigm positions *tawḥīd* as the central ethical compass guiding all scholarly activities. Asserts that *tawḥīd* functions as a moral compass ensuring that knowledge serves human well-being rather than merely material interests. True knowledge, therefore, is knowledge that draws human beings closer to God (Yunus, 2022).

The philosophy of the Tree of Knowledge also reflects a balance between the theocentric and anthropocentric dimensions of Islamic epistemology. On one hand, it affirms God's supremacy as the ultimate source of all knowledge (theocentrism). On the other, it recognizes the role of human beings as *khalīfah* entrusted with the responsibility to manage, interpret, and develop knowledge (anthropocentrism). The relationship between these dimensions is symbiotic rather than hierarchical. Humans acquire knowledge through reasoning, observation, and experimentation, yet the outcomes must remain oriented toward divine values. Thus, the integration of Islam and science within the Tree of Knowledge paradigm is not a form of subordination but a harmonization of revelation and reason (Sabilla et al., 2024)

Methodologically, the Tree of Knowledge paradigm offers an inclusive approach to scientific inquiry. It combines deductive methods derived from revelation with inductive methods rooted in empirical experience. These methodologies complement one another to produce knowledge that is not only logically valid but also morally legitimate. According to this paradigm avoids epistemological extremism, whether overly textual or excessively empirical. Ideal knowledge is that which balances remembrance and reflection, empirical discovery and spiritual awareness. This distinguishing feature sets Islamic scientific paradigms apart from modern science, which tends to be positivistic and secular in orientation.

Moreover, the Tree of Knowledge encompasses a strong axiological dimension. Islamic epistemology does not conclude at the level of knowing but extends to the purpose and impact of knowledge utilization. Knowledge that fails to generate social and spiritual benefit is considered incomplete. This paradigm emphasizes that mastery of science and technology must be directed toward public welfare and the reinforcement of social justice. In this context, the integration of Islam and science serves as a foundation for building a civilization that is just, sustainable, and oriented toward universal human values. Empirical findings demonstrate that this approach is effective in cultivating students' moral consciousness alongside strong scientific competence (Hidayah et al., 2023b).

The philosophical foundation of the Tree of Knowledge is also inspired by the classical Islamic intellectual tradition, particularly the concept of the unity of knowledge developed by thinkers such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali. In their view, knowledge constitutes an integrated hierarchy, ranging from theoretical sciences to practical sciences, all culminating in knowledge of God. The Tree of Knowledge paradigm adopts this spirit by positioning all branches of knowledge as components of a living, interdependent system. Explains that the tree structure illustrates both the hierarchical and dynamic relationship between religious sciences and

modern disciplines: the roots (revelation) provide spiritual nourishment, the trunk (Islamic sciences) serves as a connector, while the branches and fruits (contemporary sciences) represent the outcomes of integrating values and knowledge (Yunus, 2022).

Conceptually, this paradigm also responds to the epistemological crisis confronting modern education. Educational systems that prioritize cognitive achievement without moral formation tend to produce intellectually capable individuals who lack ethical orientation. The Tree of Knowledge seeks to restore education's holistic purpose: cultivating knowledgeable and civilized human beings. This vision aligns with the *ulū al-albāb*-based Islamic educational philosophy that emphasizes the unity of intellectual and spiritual development (Azmi & Dewantoro, 2024). Within Islamic higher education, this paradigm functions as a philosophical foundation for integrative curriculum design, interdisciplinary research, and the formation of Muslim scholars committed to divine values.

In conclusion, the epistemological and philosophical foundations of the Tree of Knowledge paradigm constitute the principal basis for integrating Islam and science within Islamic higher education in Indonesia. The paradigm affirms that knowledge is not merely the product of human rationality but a form of intellectual worship that leads humanity toward the recognition of God. By positioning *tawḥīd* at the center of epistemology, harmonizing revelation and reason, and emphasizing ethical values in all scholarly activities, the Tree of Knowledge paradigm offers a comprehensive response to the dichotomy of knowledge. Through this approach, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang has successfully articulated a scientific model that not only addresses epistemological fragmentation but also provides a new direction for the development of knowledge that is spiritual, rational, and humanistic in the modern era.

Implementation of the Integrative Concept of the Tree of Knowledge Model in Curriculum Development and Academic Practices at Islamic Higher Education Institutions

The implementation of the Tree of Knowledge paradigm in curriculum development and academic practices at Islamic higher education institutions represents a concrete effort to realize the integration of Islam and science at the practical level. After being philosophically and epistemologically developed by UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, the next crucial step was its application within the educational system, encompassing curriculum design, teaching and learning processes, research activities, and community engagement. This paradigm is intended not merely to remain a theoretical construct, but to function as a guiding framework for producing graduates who demonstrate a balanced integration of intellectual, spiritual, and moral intelligence.

The curriculum serves as the primary instrument for implementing the integrative paradigm, as it functions to translate scientific and religious values into students' learning experiences. According to the integrative curriculum model based on the Tree of Knowledge is structured upon the principle of coherence between religious sciences, general sciences, and humanitarian values. Each course is expected to cultivate *tauhidic* awareness through the integration of revelation and empirical reality. Consequently, knowledge is no longer positioned dichotomously between religion and science, but rather as a unified epistemic whole (Yunus, 2020).

Within the curricular structure of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, the principle of integration is operationalized through several layers. The first layer is integration at the level of content, which involves incorporating Islamic perspectives into all courses, including those in science and technology. The second layer is integration at the contextual level, whereby teaching and learning processes are linked to *tauhidic* values and humanitarian missions. The third layer is integration at the methodological level, which entails the application of pedagogical approaches that combine rational-empirical inquiry with spiritual dimensions. Argue that this approach is effective in fostering students' religious consciousness without diminishing their scientific rationality (Hidayah & Faridi, 2021).

The implementation of the Tree of Knowledge paradigm in the curriculum is also oriented toward the development of soft skills and character grounded in Islamic values. Students are not only trained to think critically, but are also guided to develop ethical awareness and social responsibility. In the learning process, lecturers assume the role of facilitators who embed *tauhidic* and humanitarian values in every academic interaction. Emphasizes that lecturers in Islamic higher education institutions perform a dual function: as scientists and as spiritual educators responsible for nurturing both intellectual competence and faith simultaneously. Therefore, the integration of knowledge in Islamic education cannot be achieved solely through curricular modification, but must also involve the formation of a religious and humanistic academic culture (Tobroni, 2020).

The implementation of this paradigm is also evident in research activities. UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang promotes integrative research that connects Islamic studies with contemporary issues such as the environment, technology, economics, and socio-cultural dynamics. Such research is directed toward generating knowledge that not only addresses empirical problems, but also contributes to the moral development of society. Assert that integrative research based on the Tree of Knowledge paradigm is capable of producing new syntheses between spirituality and rationality, rendering research outcomes not only scientifically valid but also ethically and socially meaningful. Through this approach, UIN Malang seeks to restore the function of knowledge as a form of worship and a contribution to civilization (Azmi & Dewantoro, 2024).

Beyond curriculum and research, the implementation of the Tree of Knowledge paradigm is also reflected in community service activities. Community engagement is no longer viewed as a mere administrative obligation, but as a tangible manifestation of the integration between knowledge and action. Students and lecturers are encouraged to apply the outcomes of research and learning directly in addressing societal needs, using approaches that combine Islamic values with professional scientific competence. Note that community-based learning programs at UIN Malang exemplify how the values of *ulul albab* are applied in community empowerment initiatives, such as spiritual literacy programs, Islamic entrepreneurship, and ethically grounded appropriate technology (Adyaksa & Sudirman, 2024).

The implementation of this integrative paradigm also necessitates a shift in mindset among both lecturers and students. Lecturers are no longer positioned solely as transmitters of knowledge, but also as researchers and moral mentors. Similarly, students are expected not merely to pursue academic credentials, but to seek meaning and scientific truth rooted in *tauhid*. The educational process is thus directed toward fostering spiritual intelligence that complements intellectual and emotional intelligence. Emphasize that the success of the integrative paradigm is highly dependent on the transformation of academic culture, wherein religious values are internalized across all scholarly activities rather than confined to formal worship practices (Sabilla et al., 2024).

In practice, however, the application of the Tree of Knowledge paradigm faces several challenges. One major challenge is the epistemological gap between lecturers from religious disciplines and those from scientific fields. Some lecturers still perceive knowledge integration in a superficial manner, for example by merely adding Qur'anic verses to scientific materials without establishing a conceptual linkage. Other challenges include the limited availability of integrative literature and insufficient interdisciplinary research collaboration. Argue that addressing these issues requires strong institutional strategies, such as enhancing lecturers' training in Islamic epistemology, strengthening cross-faculty research initiatives, and formulating academic policies that support integrative collaboration (Hidayah et al., 2023a).

Nevertheless, various achievements indicate that the Tree of Knowledge paradigm has had a positive impact on the development of Islamic higher education in Indonesia. Many students demonstrate simultaneous growth in spiritual awareness and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, this model has inspired other Islamic universities to develop similar paradigms aligned with their institutional characteristics. For instance, UIN Sunan Kalijaga adopts the Integration

Interconnection model, UIN Sunan Ampel implements the Twin Towers concept, and UIN Syarif Hidayatullah promotes the *Wahdatul 'Ulum* paradigm. While all these models share a common spirit of integrating faith and knowledge, the Tree of Knowledge remains a pioneering framework distinguished by its highly visual and systematic conceptual structure (Ihsanudin & Soleh, 2023).

Beyond its national influence, the Tree of Knowledge model has also attracted international attention as it offers an alternative paradigm to the epistemological crisis of modern education. Secular education, which separates morality from rationality, has often produced intellectually capable individuals who lack existential meaning. In contrast, the Tree of Knowledge paradigm asserts that knowledge must be transformative, shaping civilized personalities and directing science toward the common good. Argues that the success of an integrative paradigm should not be measured solely by academic outputs, but also by the formation of a scientific culture grounded in spiritual values. Consequently, Islamic higher education institutions must consistently maintain a balance between scientific development and the cultivation of faith in all aspects of education (Yunus, 2022).

Overall, the implementation of the integrative concept of the Tree of Knowledge in curriculum development and academic practices at Islamic higher education institutions has provided a new direction for the reform of Islamic education. This paradigm restores the function of knowledge as a pathway toward recognizing God and serving humanity. It rejects the dichotomy between religion and science and places both within an epistemological harmony rooted in *tauhidic* values. Through this approach, Islamic universities in Indonesia function not only as centers of knowledge production, but also as centers of spiritual civilization that nurture generations of *ulul albab* individuals who are intellectually competent, spiritually grounded, and morally upright.

Dynamics, Challenges, and Structural Constraints in the Implementation of the Paradigm of Knowledge Integration within Islamic Academic Environments

The implementation of the paradigm of knowledge integration in Islamic higher education institutions represents a progressive effort to overcome the long-standing dichotomy between religious sciences and general sciences that has constrained Islamic education systems. However, in practice, the implementation of this paradigm has not proceeded without difficulty. The dynamics observed indicate that although the concept of knowledge integration enjoys strong theoretical support, its practical realization continues to encounter a range of challenges and structural constraints at various institutional levels. This situation demonstrates that paradigm transformation is not merely a matter of curricular reform, but also requires fundamental changes in academic culture, management systems, and the epistemological orientation of the academic community.

The dynamics of implementing the integrative paradigm in Islamic universities can be viewed from two contrasting perspectives: academic optimism and cultural resistance. On the one hand, optimism has emerged because the paradigm of integration is perceived as capable of addressing the crisis of Islamic scientific identity in the modern era. Many scholars argue that models such as the Tree of Knowledge at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang or the Integration Interconnection framework at UIN Sunan Kalijaga offer a new direction for constructing a more holistic epistemology. According the integrative paradigm is not only philosophically relevant but also practically applicable, as it enables the internalization of Islamic values within modern scientific disciplines. On the other hand, resistance persists among segments of the academic community who continue to adhere to a dichotomous paradigm separating religious knowledge from secular sciences. For these groups, knowledge integration is often perceived as a utopian ideal that is difficult to implement within institutional structures that are already deeply fragmented (Yunus, 2020).

One of the most significant dynamics in the implementation of knowledge integration lies in epistemological differences across faculties and among lecturers. Some lecturers from religious

disciplines tend to interpret integration as the "Islamization of science," meaning the attachment of Islamic values to modern knowledge without engaging with its methodological foundations. Conversely, lecturers from scientific disciplines often view integration merely as an administrative formality aligned with the vision of Islamic universities. Argue that this divergence in understanding indicates that the core challenge lies not in curriculum structure, but in lecturers' epistemic consciousness and their understanding of Islamic epistemology itself. Consequently, the internalization of the integrative paradigm must begin with the cultivation of epistemological awareness among educators through sustained training, scholarly engagement, and interdisciplinary dialogue (Hidayah et al., 2023a).

Structural constraints also arise from academic management systems that remain sectoral in nature. In many Islamic universities, the division between faculties of "religious sciences" and "general sciences" continues to be rigidly maintained. As a result, interfaculty collaboration is often limited, even though the integrative paradigm inherently demands interdisciplinary synergy. Contend that the organizational structure of Islamic higher education institutions must be reconstructed to become more flexible and supportive of cross-disciplinary collaboration. Without such institutional restructuring, knowledge integration risks remaining rhetorical rather than substantive. For example, curricula may adopt the language of "integration," yet their implementation continues to reproduce traditional paradigms that separate religion from science (Hidayah & Faridi, 2021).

In addition to structural constraints, the dynamics of integration are strongly influenced by human resource factors. The quality and academic background of lecturers play a decisive role in determining the success of knowledge integration. Many Islamic higher education institutions still face limitations in terms of teaching staff with multidisciplinary expertise. Note that most lecturers possess single-discipline educational backgrounds either in Islamic studies or in scientific fields making it difficult to achieve comprehensive conceptual synthesis. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of systematic training in integrative epistemology and limited methodological literacy in Islamic philosophy of science. As a result, knowledge integration is often understood symbolically rather than substantively (Hidayah et al., 2023a).

Another important dynamic concerns government policies and regulatory frameworks. Accreditation systems, national curricula, and research standards are largely shaped by secular paradigms that prioritize instrumental rationality. This situation constrains Islamic universities' efforts to develop curricula fully grounded in *tauhidic* values. Hasan and Nizar (2020) argue that as long as higher education regulations apply uniform standards to both secular and religious institutions, the space for developing distinctively Islamic paradigms will remain limited. Therefore, institutional courage is required to negotiate national standards so that they become more accommodating of the mission of Islamic knowledge integration (Humairoh & Mustafidin, 2025).

External challenges also emerge from the global development of knowledge, which tends to be secular, pragmatic, and highly competitive. The contemporary international academic environment emphasizes publication productivity, citation metrics, and technological innovation. Under these conditions, some Islamic universities become entangled in the logic of educational industrialization, where academic goals are oriented toward rankings, publication indices, and institutional prestige rather than the cultivation of spiritual and moral values. Describe this phenomenon as the "commodification of knowledge," in which knowledge shifts from being a pathway to truth toward functioning as an economic and symbolic asset. The *tauhid*-based integrative paradigm seeks to correct this trajectory, but doing so requires a strong institutional commitment to balancing global demands with the ideals of Islamic scholarship (Adyaksa & Sudirman, 2024).

Academic culture itself becomes a contested arena between religious values and pragmatic orientations. Many students tend to prioritize courses perceived as economically productive over those that emphasize spiritual and ethical dimensions. This phenomenon reflects the challenge of

cultivating integrative consciousness among younger generations. Argue that Islamic universities must develop learning ecosystems capable of fostering spiritual experience through scientific processes, not solely through ritual activities. Strengthening a spiritual learning environment is therefore essential to ensure that the integrative paradigm is not only cognitively understood but also existentially internalized (Sabilla et al., 2024).

Another significant constraint is the weakness of evaluation systems for assessing the success of integrative paradigm implementation. Many universities lack clear indicators to measure the extent to which knowledge integration has been realized in curricula, research, and community engagement. Emphasizes that evaluating knowledge integration cannot be limited to curricular documents or publication outputs; it must also encompass value transformation, shifts in epistemic orientation, and improvements in the spiritual quality of both students and lecturers. In this sense, evaluating integrative knowledge requires a holistic approach that simultaneously considers academic, ethical, and religious dimensions (Yunus, 2022).

Despite these challenges, several Islamic universities have demonstrated creative efforts to strengthen the integrative paradigm. UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, for instance, has developed Islamic epistemology training programs for lecturers and new students to establish early awareness of the meaning of knowledge integration. UIN Sunan Kalijaga has intensified cross-faculty research collaboration through interdisciplinary research clusters, while UIN Sunan Ampel emphasizes the development of a spiritual campus culture as the foundation for internalizing integrative values. Note that these initiatives illustrate that knowledge integration is not a short-term project, but a long-term process requiring consistency and commitment from all elements of the university (Ihsanudin & Soleh, 2023).

In conclusion, the dynamics of implementing the integrative paradigm in Indonesian Islamic higher education can be understood as an ongoing process of intellectual and institutional evolution. This process experiences fluctuations in response to shifts in political orientation, social contexts, and academic culture. The epistemological, structural, and cultural challenges encountered indicate that knowledge integration cannot be achieved solely through formal policies, but must be pursued as a cultural movement that embeds *tauhidic* values into every dimension of academic life. The Tree of Knowledge paradigm offers a clear direction, affirming that authentic scholarship must grow from the roots of spirituality, be sustained by rational methodology, and bear fruit in the form of human welfare. If Islamic universities are able to uphold this ideal amid the pressures of globalization, knowledge integration will transcend mere rhetoric and emerge as a genuine civilizational movement.

The Relevance and Implications of the Tree of Knowledge Model for the Development Trajectory of Islamic Higher Education in the Global and Digital Era

The Tree of Knowledge paradigm developed at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang demonstrates increasing relevance amid global transformations and rapid advances in digital technology. Within the context of Islamic higher education, this model functions not merely as an epistemological symbol, but also as a comprehensive framework that offers strategic direction for addressing contemporary challenges. The global and digital era has profoundly transformed higher education systems: knowledge evolves at unprecedented speed, geographical boundaries have become increasingly porous, and information technology now serves as the backbone of teaching and learning processes (Faizah et al., 2025; Rohmiati, 2025). Under these conditions, Islamic higher education institutions are compelled to reaffirm their scholarly identity so as not to be subsumed by the secularization of knowledge. The Tree of Knowledge model provides both a conceptual and spiritual foundation for navigating these changes while remaining firmly anchored in *tauhid* as the core principle of knowledge integration (Andriyani & Leksono, 2024; Sabariah et al., 2025).

The relevance of the Tree of Knowledge paradigm lies in its capacity to connect three fundamental dimensions: spiritual roots, epistemological trunks, and applied scientific branches. In

the digital era, the interrelationship among these dimensions becomes critically important, as education is often trapped in technological pragmatism that neglects moral and spiritual considerations. Emphasizes that the Tree of Knowledge model affirms that all branches of knowledge must remain rooted in divine values to prevent science from losing its ethical orientation. Accordingly, mastery of modern science and technology must always be accompanied by spiritual awareness and moral responsibility. This principle constitutes a fundamental distinction between Islamic educational paradigms and secular education systems that prioritize efficiency and utility alone (Yunus, 2022).

Globalization demands that Islamic higher education institutions maintain high levels of competitiveness in research, publication, and innovation. At the same time, global competition carries the risk of epistemological homogenization that may erode Islamic scholarly identity. In this context, the Tree of Knowledge functions as a paradigm of resistance, safeguarding the authenticity of Islamic epistemology while remaining open to developments in modern science. Argue that one of the paradigm's key strengths lies in its flexibility in adopting scientific theories and methods without sacrificing spiritual orientation. This model enables Islamic universities to actively participate in the global scientific arena while maintaining revelation-based values as the ultimate source of truth. Through this approach, UIN Malang and other Islamic universities can cultivate a robust Islamic scientific identity amid the currents of global knowledge production (Hidayah & Faridi, 2021).

Digital transformation has also compelled Islamic higher education institutions to adapt their learning systems to information technology. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online learning and introduced new paradigms in higher education. In this context, the Tree of Knowledge demonstrates high relevance by guiding the digitalization of education in a manner that preserves spiritual values. Contend that technology should be positioned as an instrument of intellectual *da'wah* rather than merely as a mechanical tool. Digital learning within the Tree of Knowledge framework should not only facilitate knowledge transfer, but also foster meaning-making and spiritual reflection throughout the learning process. For instance, digital platforms can be designed to strengthen academic ethics, interdisciplinary collaboration, and contextual religious literacy. In this way, the integration of Islam and technology becomes a civilizational mission rather than a purely technical adaptation (Azmi & Dewantoro, 2024).

The relevance of this model is further evident in its capacity to address the moral disruption engendered by the digital era. Cyberspace often functions as a value-neutral arena in which information circulates without ethical filtration. In such circumstances, the Tree of Knowledge paradigm reiterates that authentic scholarship must guide humanity toward truth and virtue. Asserts that spiritually grounded Islamic education serves a protective function against crises of digital morality. Students and lecturers are guided to use technology responsibly, to employ digital knowledge for social benefit, and to avoid the misuse of information. By embedding *tauhidic* values within all scholarly and digital activities, Islamic universities can cultivate generations of scholars who are not only intellectually capable, but also morally integrated (Tobroni, 2020).

From an institutional development perspective, the Tree of Knowledge has significant implications for the vision and strategic direction of Islamic higher education. The model demands a shift in orientation from campuses that merely "teach knowledge" to those that actively "cultivate knowledge." This implies that Islamic universities must function as spiritual–intellectual ecosystems integrating education, research, and community engagement within a unified *tauhidic* vision. Observe that this paradigm has encouraged institutional innovations such as Integrated Research Clusters, which bring together scholars from diverse faculties to address strategic issues facing the Muslim community in a global context. Such initiatives strengthen the interdisciplinary character of Islamic universities and expand collaborative research networks oriented toward value-based solutions (Ihsanudin & Soleh, 2023).

Another implication of the Tree of Knowledge paradigm concerns the need to reformulate curricula to remain responsive to contemporary change without losing their Islamic ethos. Curricula in the digital era must encompass technological literacy, global competencies, and critical thinking skills, while remaining firmly grounded in revelatory values. Argue that integrative curriculum design should encompass three primary domains: the knowledge domain (scientific mastery), the skills domain (practical competencies), and the value domain (internalization of Islamic values). Through this approach, students are encouraged to become *digital ulul albab*. Muslim intellectuals who master technology while remaining spiritually grounded, adaptive, and oriented toward the public good. Islamic universities that implement this paradigm thus produce not only competent graduates, but also transformative agents capable of shaping a morally grounded digital civilization (Hidayah & Faridi, 2021).

The Tree of Knowledge model also has profound implications for research directions within Islamic higher education. The global era demands research that addresses contemporary issues such as environmental sustainability, artificial intelligence, and technological ethics. The integrative paradigm directs research agendas beyond mere publication outputs toward tangible social contributions. Note that research grounded in the Tree of Knowledge framework positions spiritual values as the ethical foundation for technological innovation. This implies that scientific development must account for human dignity and social justice rather than pursuing material advancement alone. With this orientation, Islamic universities can become pioneers in developing what may be termed "civilized science", knowledge that serves humanity and sustains ecological balance (Adyaksa & Sudirman, 2024).

Furthermore, the relevance of the Tree of Knowledge paradigm is evident in its role in strengthening Islamic identity amid the powerful currents of global culture. Globalization often generates identity crises among students confronted with secular modern values. Through this paradigm, Islamic higher education seeks to cultivate holistic individuals who think globally while remaining locally and spiritually rooted. Emphasize that the integration of Islam and science is intended not only to produce competent scholars, but also to nurture individuals with Qur'anic character. Within this framework, the Tree of Knowledge symbolizes harmony between intellectuality and spirituality, rationality and morality, as well as knowledge and service (Fariqoini, 2024).

Overall, the implications of the Tree of Knowledge paradigm for the future development of Islamic higher education in the global and digital era may be synthesized into three principal dimensions. First, the epistemological dimension, in which the paradigm serves as the foundation for reconstructing holistic, *tauhid*-based knowledge. Second, the institutional dimension, which necessitates reform of structures, curricula, and academic culture in accordance with integrative principles (Daulay et al., 2024; Rohmadiyah et al., 2024). Third, the civilizational dimension, wherein Islamic universities function as moral and intellectual agents in shaping a civilized digital world. Asserts that the success of the integrative paradigm lies in its ability to position Islamic campuses as centers of spiritual enlightenment amid an increasingly mechanistic world (Yunus, 2022).

In conclusion, the Tree of Knowledge model is not merely an academic symbol, but a strategic paradigm highly relevant to the global demands of the twenty-first century. It affirms that Islamic higher education must not merely follow modernity, but actively guide civilization by upholding universal human values. Amid the accelerating tide of digitalization, this paradigm offers a moral and intellectual compass to ensure that knowledge does not lose its spiritual orientation. If implemented consistently, the Tree of Knowledge model can serve as a strong foundation for nurturing a generation of *digital ulul albab*, individuals of profound knowledge, noble character, and the capacity to contribute meaningfully to the development of a globally competitive Islamic civilization.

CONCLUSION

The Tree of Knowledge paradigm developed within Islamic higher education represents a systematic effort to integrate Islamic values and modern science into a unified epistemological framework. More than a philosophical metaphor, it functions as a conceptual model that guides the development of knowledge in Islamic universities. In this paradigm, the roots symbolize divine revelation as the ultimate source of knowledge, the trunk represents epistemological and methodological processes, and the branches signify diverse scientific disciplines emerging from the same foundation. Through this structure, the Tree of Knowledge affirms the unity of faith, knowledge, and action as the core identity of authentic Islamic education.

Historically, this paradigm emerged as a response to the long-standing dichotomy between religious sciences and secular sciences that has characterized modern Islamic education. Such separation has weakened the holistic formation of human beings. The Tree of Knowledge seeks to reconstruct the epistemological unity that once underpinned classical Islamic civilization by asserting *tauhid* as the common foundation of all branches of knowledge. From an epistemological perspective, revelation, reason, and empirical experience are positioned in a synergistic relationship rather than a hierarchical one. Science is not detached from spiritual values, nor does reason negate revelation; instead, all three mutually reinforce the pursuit of truth, offering a coherent alternative to fragmented and secular models of knowledge.

In practical terms, the Tree of Knowledge paradigm has significantly influenced curriculum design, teaching practices, and research orientations in Islamic higher education. Education is no longer understood merely as knowledge transmission, but as a holistic process of intellectual, moral, and spiritual formation. Despite challenges such as persistent dichotomous thinking and structural limitations within academic institutions, the paradigm remains highly relevant in the context of globalization and digitalization. It provides an ethical and epistemological compass to ensure that scientific and technological advancement remains oriented toward human dignity, moral responsibility, and spiritual consciousness. Consequently, the Tree of Knowledge offers a strategic foundation for shaping Islamic universities as centers of knowledge, values, and civilization in the contemporary world.

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