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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18021340>**The Role of Tauhidic Epistemology in Traditional And Modern Pakistani Society: A Contemporary Analysis****Ahmed Ikhlaq**

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elmuhammady@iium.edu.my**Abstract**

Tauhidic epistemology, grounded in the Islamic principle of Tauhid (the oneness of Allah), provides a holistic framework for understanding knowledge, reality, and human existence. In Pakistani society, this epistemological worldview has historically shaped social norms, moral values, education, and collective identity. This paper examines the role of Tauhidic epistemology in both traditional and modern Pakistani contexts, analyzing how it continues to influence thought patterns, cultural practices, and societal structures amid rapid modernization and globalization. The study explores the tension and interaction between traditional religious knowledge systems and modern secular epistemologies introduced through colonial legacies, contemporary education, and digital media. By adopting a contemporary analytical approach, the paper highlights how Tauhidic epistemology functions as a unifying moral and intellectual foundation, while also facing challenges such as fragmentation of knowledge, identity crises, and value conflicts in modern Pakistani society. The analysis argues that a renewed engagement with Tauhidic epistemology can contribute to ethical coherence, social harmony, and intellectual integration by bridging the divide between faith-based and modern knowledge systems. Ultimately, the study underscores the relevance of Tauhidic epistemology as a dynamic and adaptable framework for addressing contemporary social, educational, and cultural challenges in Pakistan.

Keywords: *Tauhidic Epistemology; Tauhid; Islamic Worldview; Knowledge Systems; Pakistani Society; Tradition and Modernity; Religion and Society; Cultural Identity; Modernization; Ethics.*

1. Introduction

Every society is built upon a specific understanding of knowledge, which shapes its moral and intellectual culture. In the Islamic worldview, knowledge is not seen as a neutral or purely secular tool. Instead, it is firmly rooted in the principle of *Tauhid* (the Oneness of God). This concept, known as **Tauhidic Epistemology**, creates a framework where all branches of knowledge, whether scientific, religious, or social, are interconnected and

originate from a single divine source.¹For centuries, this holistic view guided Muslim civilizations in developing their systems of education, law, and ethics. As a nation founded on Islamic ideology, Pakistan's social structure and collective identity have been deeply influenced by this epistemological tradition.

Historically, traditional Pakistani society was organized around religious institutions such as *madrasas* and Sufi orders (*Khanqahs*). In these settings, the pursuit of knowledge was inseparable from moral and spiritual growth. The goal of education was not just to acquire skills for employment, but to develop a refined human being (*Insan Adabi*) who understood their relationship with the Creator.² In this traditional context, the Tauhidic worldview acted as a glue that held society together, ensuring that reasoning and faith worked in harmony rather than in opposition.

However, the arrival of modernity, specifically through British colonial rule and the introduction of Western education systems, brought a different way of thinking into the region. Modern secular epistemology tends to separate facts from values, prioritizing what can be measured empirically while often sidelining spiritual truths.³ This has created a significant "intellectual dualism" in Pakistan. Today, religious education and modern secular education operate in two completely separate spheres. This divide has led to confusion regarding identity and ethics, as society struggles to reconcile traditional faith with modern demands.⁴

These challenges have intensified in the 21st century due to the rise of digital media and globalization. Younger generations in Pakistan now navigate a complex environment where global secular norms often clash with local religious values. They are tasked with balancing their Muslim identity with the pressures of a globalized lifestyle.⁵ In this confusing landscape, it is necessary to revisit the concept of Tauhidic epistemology. The question is not how to reject modernity, but how to engage with it using an Islamic framework that keeps knowledge and ethics integrated.

This paper examines the role of Tauhidic epistemology in Pakistan, looking at both its historical roots and its current relevance. It explores how this worldview shaped the past and how it is being challenged today by secularism and the fragmentation of knowledge. The study argues that by reviving a Tauhidic approach to knowledge, Pakistani society can find a way to bridge the gap between faith and modern science.⁶ Ultimately, this framework offers a path toward greater ethical coherence and social harmony in a rapidly changing world.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Theological Roots of Knowledge:

The concept of Tauhidic epistemology is built upon the core Islamic belief of *Tauhid* (the Oneness of God). In this worldview, all knowledge, whether spiritual or scientific, comes from a single divine source. Classical Muslim scholars established this idea by refusing to separate knowledge from ethics. For instance, the renowned scholar

¹ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978), 133.

² Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 45.

³ Pervez Hoodbhoy, *Islam and Science: Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality* (London: Zed Books, 1991), 28.

⁴ Tariq Rahman, *Denizens of Alien Worlds: A Study of Education, Inequality and Polarization in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 12.

⁵ Madiha Affan, "Digital Media and Youth Identity in Pakistan," *Journal of Islamic & Religious Studies* 3, no. 1 (2018): 55.

⁶ Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Al-Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (Herndon: IIIT, 1982), 18.

Al-Ghazali argued in his work *Ihya Ulum al-Din* that knowledge is not just information; it must lead to moral purification and a deeper connection with God. If knowledge does not improve a person's character, Al-Ghazali viewed it as spiritually harmful.⁷ Similarly, the philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes) argued that there is no conflict between religion and reason. In his *Decisive Treatise*, he stated that using logic and reason is a valid way to understand divine truth, as long as it is done correctly.⁸ These early scholars proved that in Islam, reason and faith are meant to work together, not against each other.

2.2 Modern Responses to Secularism:

In the modern era, Muslim thinkers have had to defend this holistic view against the spread of Western secularism. Secularism often treats knowledge as "value-free" and separate from religion. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas criticized this approach, arguing that modern secular education causes a "loss of *adab*" (discipline and proper conduct). He explained that without the framework of *Tauhid*, students become confused about the true purpose of knowledge.⁹ To solve this, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi proposed the "Islamization of Knowledge." He suggested that modern sciences should be integrated with Islamic values to fix the split between religious and worldly education.¹⁰ Both scholars agree that reviving Tauhidic epistemology is necessary to fix the fragmentation seen in modern education.

2.3 The Pakistani Context: Educational Dualism:

In Pakistan, this conflict between religious and secular knowledge is clearly visible in the education system. Pervez Hoodbhoy highlighted the deep divide between *madrasas* (religious schools) and secular universities. He argued that this separation has weakened the country's intellectual culture. *Madrasas* focus on religious texts but often ignore modern science, while universities focus on technical skills but often ignore ethical or spiritual training.¹¹ This "dual system" has created a society where people struggle to connect their faith with their professional lives, leading to identity confusion.

2.4 Cultural Manifestations: Sufism and Society:

Historically, the principles of *Tauhid* were not just discussed in books; they were practiced in daily life through Sufi traditions. Annemarie Schimmel noted that Sufi poetry and rituals helped common people understand the oneness of God emotionally and practically.¹² These traditions promoted values like tolerance and social harmony. However, recent research suggests that the influence of this inclusive Sufi worldview is fading. Urbanization and the rise of more rigid, literalist interpretations of Islam have reduced the role of these traditional practices in guiding social behaviour.

2.5 Contemporary Challenges Today, the situation is even more complex due to globalization and digital media. Zia argues that exposure to global narratives has changed how younger generations understand truth and

⁷ Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum al-Din* [The Revival of the Religious Sciences], trans. Fazlur Rahman (Karachi: Darul Ishaat, 2004), 88.

⁸ Ibn Rushd, *The Decisive Treatise* [Fasl al-Maqal], trans. George F. Hourani (London: Luzac & Co., 2001), 45.

⁹ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993), 133.

¹⁰ Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (Herndon: IIIT, 1982), 15.

¹¹ Pervez Hoodbhoy, *Islam and Science: Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality* (London: Zed Books, 1998), 122.

¹² Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 23.

authority.¹³ Young Pakistanis are now exposed to many different worldviews simultaneously, leading to "epistemological pluralism", a situation where religious and secular ideas exist side-by-side but do not interact. This study aims to fill the gap in current research by analysing how Tauhidic epistemology interacts with *both* traditional culture and modern digital challenges.

3. Research Methodology

Research Design This study applies a qualitative research design. Qualitative methodology is selected because the research focuses on abstract concepts, specifically religious epistemology and social values, which cannot be quantified using statistical data.¹⁴ The primary objective is to interpret how the concept of *Tauhid* functions as a knowledge system within the social fabric of Pakistan. Consequently, the research is descriptive and analytical, aiming to understand the "how" and "why" of the interaction between traditional religious values and modern secular forces.

Data Collection Strategy The study relies entirely on library-based research, utilizing a doctrinal and document-based approach. Data sources are divided into two categories to ensure a balanced analysis:

1. **Primary Sources:** To define the theoretical framework of Tauhidic epistemology, the study examines foundational Islamic texts, including relevant verses from the Quran and Prophetic traditions (*Sunnah*), as well as classical philosophical works by scholars such as Al-Ghazali.
2. **Secondary Sources:** To analyse the Pakistani context, the study utilizes academic literature, including sociological reports, historical texts, and peer-reviewed journal articles.¹⁵ These sources provide data on the educational system in Pakistan, the historical impact of colonialism, and contemporary social challenges.

Data Analysis Method The collected data is analysed using the thematic analysis method. This involves systematically reading the selected literature to identify recurring themes, such as "educational dualism," "ethical fragmentation," and "knowledge integration."¹⁶ Furthermore, the study employs a comparative approach, contrasting traditional knowledge transmission (Sufi orders and *madrasas*) with modern knowledge dissemination (secular universities and digital platforms).

Scope and Limitations The scope of this research is limited to the intellectual and social landscape of Pakistan. While *Tauhid* is a universal Islamic principle, this paper restricts its analysis to its application within the specific cultural and historical experiences of Pakistani society. The study is theoretical and does not involve empirical fieldwork, surveys, or interviews.¹⁷

¹³ Afiya Shehribano Zia, *Faith and Feminism in Pakistan: Religious Agency or Secular Autonomy?* (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2018), 67.

¹⁴ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed., Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2018), 41.

¹⁵ Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4th ed., San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 162.

¹⁶ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (3rd ed., Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2013), 30.

¹⁷ Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (6th ed., London: SAGE, 2018), 92.

4. Conceptual Framework

Overview This research is built upon a conceptual framework that compares two distinct ways of understanding knowledge: Tauhidic Epistemology (the Islamic view) and Secular Epistemology (the modern/Western view). Understanding the difference between these two is essential for analyzing the current state of Pakistani society.

Tauhidic Epistemology: The Unity of Knowledge The core concept of this study is *Tauhidic Epistemology*. In this framework, knowledge is not divided into separate compartments. Instead, it is unified under the belief in *Tauhid* (the Oneness of God). According to this view, all knowledge, whether it is religious knowledge (like theology) or scientific knowledge (like physics), comes from the same source: Allah.¹⁸

- **Hierarchy of Knowledge:** It recognizes that while human reason and the senses are important tools, they are guided by Divine Revelation (*Wahy*). Reason is used to understand the world, but it respects moral limits set by religion.
- **Purpose:** The goal of learning is not just to get a job or develop technology, but to develop *Adab* (right conduct) and recognize one's spiritual purpose.

Modern Secular Epistemology: The Separation of Knowledge In contrast, the "Modern" framework, which entered Pakistan largely through colonial education and continues through global media, is based on *Secular Epistemology*. This worldview separates the "sacred" (religious) from the "profane" (worldly). It relies on empiricism (what can be tested) and often treats values as subjective.¹⁹

The "Dualism" in Pakistani Society The central problem this paper analyzes is the conflict between these two frameworks. This is often called "Educational Dualism."²⁰ The traditional sphere (*madrasas*) keeps the Tauhidic view but sometimes ignores modern sciences, while the modern sphere (universities) uses the secular view but often ignores Islamic ethics.

5. Significance of the Study

This research is significant because it addresses a critical intellectual crisis facing contemporary Pakistan: the widening gap between religious values and modern social realities. While much has been written about political instability or economic challenges in Pakistan, fewer studies address the underlying "crisis of knowledge" that shapes the mindset of the nation.²¹

Theoretical Contribution This study contributes to the field of Islamic Sociology and Epistemology by moving beyond abstract theology. It demonstrates how *Tauhid* is not merely a spiritual belief but a practical social framework. By analyzing traditional and modern contexts together, it fills a gap in existing literature, which often treats religious tradition and modern development as opposing forces.

Practical Relevance for Education The findings of this study are particularly important for educational policymakers in Pakistan. The country is currently struggling with a dual education system that creates social

¹⁸ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), 14.

¹⁹ Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (Herndon: IIIT, 1982), 22.

²⁰ Pervez Hoodbhoy, *Islam and Science: Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality* (London: Zed Books, 1991), 55.

²¹ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 132.

division.²² This research offers a theoretical basis for "Integrated Curricula," showing how modern subjects like science and sociology can be taught through an ethical, Tauhidic lens without compromising academic rigor.

Social and Cultural Impact Finally, this study is significant for understanding the identity crisis among Pakistani youth. As digital media exposes young people to conflicting global values, this research highlights how a renewed understanding of Tauhidic epistemology can provide them with a stable "moral anchor."

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined the role of Tauhidic epistemology in shaping the social and intellectual fabric of Pakistan. The analysis reveals that for centuries, the principle of *Tauhid* provided a unified framework where knowledge, ethics, and social practice were deeply interconnected. In traditional Pakistani society, institutions like Sufi orders and *madrasas* successfully maintained this balance, ensuring that individuals were spiritually grounded while engaging with their community.

However, the study concludes that colonial history and rapid modernization have disrupted this unity, resulting in "epistemological dualism." Today, Pakistan operates with two conflicting knowledge systems: a religious system that is often isolated from modern progress, and a secular system that lacks ethical grounding. This divide has led to moral confusion and a fragmented national identity.²³

Ultimately, this research argues that the solution is not to reject modernity, nor to abandon tradition. Instead, the way forward lies in a "critical integration." Tauhidic epistemology remains a dynamic and relevant framework for the 21st century. By viewing all knowledge, scientific, social, and spiritual, as derived from a single divine source, Pakistani society can bridge the gap between faith and reason.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for policymakers, educators, and social leaders in Pakistan:

Curriculum Integration (The "Islamization of Knowledge" Approach) Educational authorities should move beyond simply adding "Islamic Studies" as a separate subject in universities. Instead, they should work on integrating ethical perspectives into "secular" subjects.²⁴ For example, science textbooks should include chapters on the ethics of usage from an Islamic perspective.

Teacher Training Reforms Teachers in both *madrasas* and private schools often lack the training to bridge the gap between religion and modernity. Training programs should be developed to teach *madrasa* graduates basics of modern sociology and science, while secular schoolteachers should be trained in Islamic ethics (*Akhlaq*) and the concept of *Adab*.

Promoting "Digital Adab" (Digital Ethics) Recognizing the massive influence of social media, religious scholars and influencers must develop content that addresses modern digital challenges. A framework for "Digital Adab"

²² Tariq Rahman, *Denizens of Alien Worlds: A Study of Education, Inequality and Polarization in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 155.

²³ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), 88.

²⁴ Rosnani Hashim, *Educational Dualism in Malaysia: Implications for Theory and Practice* (Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2004), 112.

should be promoted, guiding youth on how to navigate the internet with the consciousness of *Tauhid*, filtering information and maintaining moral integrity in online spaces.²⁵

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