



Scientific Approach and Spirituality in Islamic Economic Development: A Philosophical Analysis of Science

Ramlah¹, Abdul Wahab², Muhammad Wahyuddin Abdullah³, Sunarto Natsir⁴

^{1,2,3} UIN Alauddin Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia

⁴ Anadolu Üniversitesi, Turkey

E-mail: ramlaaah055@gmail.com¹, abdulwahab@uin-alauddin.ac.id², wahyuddin.abdullah@uin-alauddin.ac.id³, sunarto.ind@gmail.com⁴

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Abstract

This study aims to provide both a concise and in-depth discussion of the science approach within the context of Islamic economics. Using a qualitative method based on library research, this study examines recent academic literature to identify research gaps and propose novelty in the construction of Islamic economic epistemology. The findings indicate that the epistemology of Islamic economics is grounded in divine revelation (the Qur'an and Sunnah), integrated with reason and empirical reality; its ontology emphasizes that economic activities are acts of worship and a trust to prosper the earth; while its axiology is oriented toward fahlah (worldly and eternal well-being), justice, maslahah (public interest), and sustainability. These findings reveal that Islamic economics is tauhidi (monotheistic), integrative, and transformative, serving not only as an alternative but also as a conceptual and practical solution to contemporary socio-economic challenges. The implementation of Islamic instruments such as productive zakat, waqf, and green sukuk demonstrates the practical relevance of Islamic economics in establishing a just, inclusive, and sustainable system.

Keywords: Islamic Economics, Epistemology, Ontology, Axiology, Scientific Approach

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan pembahasan yang ringkas namun mendalam mengenai pendekatan ilmiah dalam konteks ekonomi Islam. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif berdasarkan penelitian perpustakaan, penelitian ini menganalisis literatur akademik terkini untuk mengidentifikasi celah penelitian dan mengusulkan inovasi dalam pembentukan epistemologi ekonomi Islam. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa epistemologi ekonomi Islam berakar pada wahyu ilahi (Al-Qur'an dan Sunnah), terintegrasi dengan akal dan realitas empiris; ontologinya menekankan bahwa aktivitas ekonomi adalah ibadah dan amanah untuk memakmurkan bumi; sementara aksiloginya berorientasi pada fahlah (kesejahteraan duniawi dan akhirat), keadilan, maslahah (kepentingan umum), dan keberlanjutan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa ekonomi Islam bersifat tauhidi (monoteistik), integratif, dan transformatif, tidak hanya sebagai alternatif tetapi juga sebagai solusi konseptual dan praktis untuk tantangan sosio-ekonomi kontemporer. Penerapan instrumen Islam seperti zakat produktif, waqf, dan sukuk hijau menunjukkan relevansi praktis ekonomi Islam dalam membangun sistem yang adil, inklusif, dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Ekonomi Islam, Epistemologi, Ontologi, Aksiologi, Pendekatan Ilmiah



A. INTRODUCTION

Economics is an integral aspect of Islamic teachings, because Islam is essentially comprehensive, covering all dimensions of human life (Yasmansyah & Sesmiarni, 2021). Islamic economics is not only built on the practical needs of humans in managing resources, but also rooted in an epistemological foundation for managing resources, which is strongly grounded in revelatory sources (Hasan et al. 2023). This foundation distinguishes Islamic economics from conventional economics, which relies solely on human rationality and empirical experience. Islamic economics makes the Qur'an and Sunnah its primary epistemological sources (Suganda, 2022), thereby giving rise to distinctive characteristics that are not only normative but also spiritual and ethical.

Epistemological studies in Islamic economics aim to understand how economic knowledge in Islam is constructed, validated, and applied. In this context, the scientific approach is not interpreted in a secular and positivistic manner as in the Western paradigm, but rather directed toward uncovering truth through the integration of revelation, reason, and empirical reality (Wahyuni et al. 2022). Thus, the epistemology of Islamic economics is tauhidic, that is, it is based on the principle of the unity of divine values that harmoniously combines rational, empirical, and spiritual aspects.

The application of a scientific approach in revelation-based Islamic economics opens up space for the development of more comprehensive economic theory and practice. This approach helps to explain Sharia principles in a systematic, logical, and scientifically accountable manner, without neglecting the spiritual dimension which is a key feature of Islamic teachings (Misbach & Amin, 2021). In this way, Islamic economics has the potential to continue to developing as a discipline that is not only morally relevant but also rational and applicable in addressing the problems of the ummah.

Previous research has discussed various aspects of the scientific approach in Islamic economics. (Nurkaromah et al., 2025) emphasizes the importance of integrating the spiritual dimension in the development of Islamic economic theory so that it is morally and rationally relevant. Ibn Khaldun's thought suggests that economic decision-making should be viewed within the framework of moral and spiritual responsibility, where economic activities are part of devotion to Allah SWT. The concepts of tauhid,

khalifah, and adl are integrated to create an economic model that balance rationality with moral integrity, thereby capable of addressing contemporary social and economic challenges. (Agustin et al., 2025) highlight the epistemological roots of Islamic economics, which are based on revelation, as the primary distinction from conventional economics. Meanwhile, (Zahro' et al., 2024) examine how the science approach in Islamic economics can be applied systematically without neglecting sharia values, emphasizing that methodology in Islamic economics must remain grounded in Islamic moral and ethical values, thereby producing economic theories and practices aligned with Islamic teachings.

However, previous studies have tended to emphasize normative and theoretical aspects without providing a clear methodological framework for integrating science and spirituality in Islamic economic practice. This has created a gap in the development of Islamic economic epistemology, particularly in the context of addressing modern socio-economic challenges. This gap is addressed in this study by offering a conceptual framework that emphasizes the integrity of revelation, reason, and empirical reality, thereby producing a more applicable, sustainable, and relevant Islamic economic epistemology in line with contemporary dynamics.

Therefore, this study seeks to thoroughly examine the application of a scientific approach in the context of Islamic economics. With this understanding, Islamic economics is expected to continue to grow as an autonomous discipline, not merely as an alternative but as the primary solution in building an economic system that is fair, inclusive, and grounded in divine values. This paper aims to examine the scientific foundation of Islamic economics through a brief but in-depth discussion.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study use a qualitative approach with a library research method (Sulistiyani & Mulyono, 2022). The selection of this method is based on the research objective, which focuses on an in-depth examination of the concepts of epistemology, ontology, and axiology in Islamic economics through the analysis of relevant literature. Literature review plays an important role in identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the results of

previous studies, thereby revealing conceptual gaps that have not been adequately addressed in the discourse on the integration of science and spirituality in Islamic economics (Ridwan et al., 2021). Thus, this study not only describes existing theories but also provides a critical review that presents a new analytical framework that is more applicable, sustainable, and relevant to contemporary dynamics.

The analysis in this study is based on a philosophy of science framework that encompasses three main dimensions: ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Munip, 2024). These dimensions of the philosophy of science are combined with the principles of Islamic economics derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah (Nasutiona et al., 2024), enabling this study to present a more comprehensive understanding of the integration of revelation, reason, and empirical reality in constructing the epistemology of Islamic economics. The use of this theoretical framework serves to validate the research position, provide robust academic foundation alongside practical significance in addressing current economic challenges.

The type of data used in this research is secondary data obtained from various academic literature. The main sources include internationally indexed journal articles such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and Dimensions, as well as books, proceedings, and other academic documents related to the philosophy of science and Islamic economics. The selection of secondary data is based on the consideration that this research is conceptual in nature, so it is more appropriate to use literature that has been published and verified in academic forums (Ridwan et al., 2021).

Data were gathered through searches in electronic databases including Scopus, Google Scholar, and Dimensions using the keywords "Islamic economics," "epistemology," "ontology," "axiology," and "science approach." To maintain relevance, inclusion criteria were set for articles and books published between 2015 and 2025, available in full text, and directly related to the research topic. Exclusion criteria included literature that was not relevant to the research variables or published before 2015 (Sadr, 2019). This selection process ensures that only literature with sufficient validity and reliability is utilized. After conducting the search, 40 articles and books were selected for careful reading, covering the abstract, objectives, research methods, and research results.

The data obtained were then analyzed using a descriptive-analytical approach. Descriptive analysis was used to systematically describe the findings from the selected literature, while critical analysis was conducted by comparing various perspectives to identify patterns, gaps, and proposed solutions. The literature was grouped into three major themes: ontology, epistemology, and axiology, followed by an in-depth examination to understand their implications for the development of Islamic economics. This analysis aligns with the perspective of Farahanifard & Farahanifard (2020), who emphasize that the reconstruction of Islamic economics requires the integration of empirical methods with a philosophical framework to produce a systematic, applicable theory grounded in Islamic values.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study shows that Islamic economics has epistemological, ontological, and axiological foundations that are fundamentally different from conventional economics.

1. Epistemology of Islamic Economics

Islamic economic epistemology is based on the Qur'an and Sunnah as the main sources of knowledge, which are then reinforced by reason and empirical experience as long as they do not contradict Sharia law (Nasutiona et al., 2024; Adzkiya & Hasan, 2022). Therefore, Islamic economics positions divine values as the foundation for both the pursuit and application knowledge. This highlights that economic activities are assessed not solely by efficiency and profit, but also by their adherence to principles of justice, public welfare, and societal blessing (Syahputra & Nurhayati, 2022). In the development of knowledge, Islamic economic methodology uses a deductive approach starting from the Qur'an and Sunnah towards empirical and inductive application starting from socio-economic reality towards normative arguments (Rifqi & Nihayah, 2023). This shows that Islamic economic epistemology bridges revelation, reason, and empirical reality.

Epistemological Schools of Thought in Islamic Economics

The literature review also identifies three main schools of thought in Islamic economic epistemology. The Baqir Sadr school rejects the assumption of scarcity and emphasizes the importance of fair distribution (Ahmad Yunadi, 2022). The Mainstream

school accepts the basic framework of conventional economics, but include Islamic values as guidance. Meanwhile, the Alternative-Critical School encourages critical reflection on Islamic economic theory and emphasizes the need for scientific testing of the resulting propositions (Agustin et al., 2025).

2. Ontology of Islamic Economics

Islamic economic ontology emphasizes that the essence of economics is not limited to fulfilling basic needs but also involves devotion to Allah SWT (Munip, 2024; Desy Lidya Alsha & Husni Thamrin, 2021). The core principle of Islamic economy consists of the view that: natural resources are sufficient for humanity; consumption must be regulated to prevent excess; production is an act of worship; distribution must be equitable; and usury is prohibited (Malik, 2019; Anshari, 2024). Islamic economics is also seen as part of the effort to realize the Maqasid al-Syariah. Core principles such as social justice, diverse ownership, and freedom of will form the foundational basis for building a sustainable economic system (Nasutiona et al., 2024).

3. Islamic Economic Axiology

From an axiological perspective, the main objective of Islamic economics is to achieve *falah* (happiness in this world and the hereafter), Ensuring that every economic activity is regarded as both an act of devotion to Allah and a contribution to the prosperity of the earth (Dewi Rokhmah, 2021; Nahlah et al., 2024). Values such as justice, *maslahah*, and *ukhuwah* serve as the principles guiding Islamic economics toward collective well-being (Fazira et al., 2025). Instruments such as *zakat*, *infak*, and *sedekah* emphasize the role of Islamic economics in wealth redistribution, reducing social inequality, and achieving sustainability (Agustin et al., 2025). Islamic economics therefore offers a substitute for conventional economic system, that primarily emphasizes utilitarianism and individualism.

Discussion

1. The Foundations and Epistemology of Islamic Economics

The foundations and epistemology of Islamic economics are the main basis for understanding how economics is developed from an Islamic perspective. Unlike conventional economics, which is based solely on human rationality, Islamic economics

derives its foundation from the Qur'an and Sunnah, and further supported by rational thought and empirical experience so long as they do not contradict sharia principles (Nasutiona et al., 2024), (Adzkiya & Hasan, 2022). Islamic economic epistemology emphasizes divine values in the search and for and application of knowledge, guiding economic activities to be measured not just by profit and efficiency, but also by justice, public welfare, and societal benefit (Syahputra & Nurhayati, 2022).

From an epistemological perspective, Islamic economics is obtained through an empirical approach by observing social phenomena in human efforts to fulfill their needs. The results of these observations are then compiled into generalizations through specific premises that lead to general conclusions through reasoning. It is at this point that economics and fiqh muamalah intersect and run parallel in a harmonious methodological pattern. In this case, Islamic economics is developed based on three main methodological frameworks. First, presumptions and ideas or basic principles of Islamic economics sourced from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and fiqh. These divine values are then formulated and developed into a scientific approach that forms the framework of Islamic economic thinking (Farahanifard & Farahanifard, 2020). The sources of knowledge in Islamic economics are also obtained through exploration of the Qur'an and Sunnah, with the *ijtihad* of fuqaha and *usul fiqh* scholars using *usuliyah* principles. One of the methods used is the double movement, which is deductive, starting from the text of revelation to be applied to empirical cases, and inductive, from socio-economic phenomena in society which are then linked to normative arguments (Rifqi & Nihayah, 2023).

Islamic economics is built on a number of basic principles derived from the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, including *tawhid*, it views all economic activities as acts of worship; requires every policies to serve the public benefit (*maslahah*); and stresses equitable distribution of wealth (*justice*). Additionally, the concept of *khilafah* reinforce humanity's role as Allah's representatives in managing resources fairly, and the principle of *ukhuwah* promotes solidarity, cooperation, and brotherhood as pillars of an inclusive Islamic economic system (Anshari, 2024). Other principles include respect for work, productivity, relative ownership recognizing that all ownership ultimately belongs to Allah, and a balance between freedom and responsibility. Islam also mandates social

security for the underprivileged, while demanding the exemplary moral conduct of the Prophet in economic activities, values such as honesty, trustworthiness, communication, and wisdom, to ensure a fair and professional economy.

Second, the concept of value-based judgment or the Islamic approach to economic reality. This approach emphasizes that Islam does not view economics as neutral and value-free as conventional economics does, but rather places divine values as the basis for assessing the goodness or badness of economic activities (Inayati & Mulyawisdawati, 2024). The standards for evaluation encompass efficiency and profit, as well as the extent to which the activity promotes benefit (*maslahah*) and adheres to sharia principles (Zein et al., 2024). This perspective is closely linked to the concept of Islamic utility, where the benefit of a good or service is assessed based on its contribution to achieving the objectives of Islamic law (*maqashid al-syariah*), namely safeguarding religion, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth (Harahap & Alfadri, 2021). Thus, every economic decision must consider the moral and ethical values of Sharia to create justice, blessings, and the welfare of the community.

Third, the positive part of economic science emphasizes economic realities and how Islamic principles can be applied in practice. In this context, Islamic economics does not stop at normative idealism, but seeks to answer questions about what is happening and how Islam responds to it based on the principles of justice, *maslahah*, and *tauhid* (Malik, 2019). In this way, the positive part serves as a bridge between Islamic economic theory and practical application. Islamic principles are embodied in systems of production, distribution, consumption, and public policy that align with societal conditions. For example, in addressing poverty, this approach analyzes empirical data and seeks solutions rooted in Islamic teachings to be implemented systematically (Mujahidin, 2015).

Furthermore, the literature also indicates the existence of three main epistemological schools of thought in Islamic economics: Baqir Sadr, Mainstream, and Alternative-Critical. To clarify the differences, the following is a comparative table (Agustin et al., 2025):

Table 1. Comparison of Epistemological Schools in Islamic Economics

Mazhab	Basic Assumptions	Strength	Limitations	Practical Implications
Baqir Sadr	Rejecting the assumptions of resource scarcity and unlimited human desires, Islamic economics differs fundamentally from conventional economics.	Committed to social justice and fair distribution of wealth.	Weak in practical methodological framework to deal with modern market dynamics.	Relevant to critiques of capitalism and exploitation; reinforces discourses of social justice and distribution.
Mainstream	Accepting conventional assumptions (scarcity and unlimited desire), but adding Islamic values as guidance.	More applicable and easier to implement in the context of modern economic policy.	It has the potential to weaken the originality of Islamic epistemology because it is too close to the Western paradigm.	Suitable for the development of Islamic finance and market-based economic policies.

Alternatif- Kritis	Interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah is reflective, subjective, and open to scientific testing.	Offering a critical approach, open to plurality of interpretations and scientific methodologies.	At risk of falling into interpretive relativism; lacks clear practical direction.	Useful in dealing with contemporary plurality of interpretations, including issues of fintech, green economy, and SDGs.
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Source: Yunandi 2022; Agustin 2025.

A comparison of the three schools of thought shows that each has its own strengths and limitations. The Baqir Sadr emphasizes sharp philosophical differences with conventional economics, making it relevant in criticizing global capitalism. However, this approach lacks applicable methodological tools. The Mainstream school is more flexible and adaptive in the context of modern policy, although it has the potential to weaken the epistemological independence of Islam. Meanwhile, the Alternative-Critical School emphasizes reflection and methodological openness, but risks giving rise to interpretive relativism. Therefore, the synthesis of an ideal Islamic economic epistemology needs to combine the strengths of the three schools of thought: a focus on social justice, practical applicability, and methodological openness to address contemporary challenges such as economic digitalization, sharia fintech, the green economy, and sustainable development (SDGs).

2. Ontology in Islamic Economics

Ontology comes from the Greek words *ontos*, meaning something that truly exists or true reality, and *logos*, meaning science or thought. In the context of philosophy, ontology discusses what we want to know and how deeply we seek that knowledge. Ontology is related to the theory of "being," or in other words, it is a discussion of the existence of an object of study (Munip, 2024). In the study of Islamic economics, the ontological approach is used to understand the basis and essence of Islamic economics

itself, which is derived from the Qur'an and Hadith as sources of absolute truth and differs from conventional economic systems (Alsha & Thamrin, 2021).

The essence of Islamic economics encompasses several key principles, namely: First, natural resources are considered sufficient to meet human needs because Allah, as the Creator, has arranged them perfectly. Second, human needs have been determined and controlled by Islamic teachings, which distinguish between wealth that is owned and wealth that is enjoyed. Third, consumption in Islam is limited so that it is not excessive, wasteful, or driven by desire, because these things have a negative impact on human behavior. (Malik, 2019).

Fourth, production in the Islamic perspective is viewed as a noble deed. Activities such as farming are considered a form of charity because they benefit living creatures. Fifth, the distribution of wealth must be equitable and should not be limited to certain groups, which is realized through instruments such as zakat, infaq, and charity. Sixth, Islam rejects the practice of usury and emphasizes that the Islamic economy is built on the basis of peace and prosperity, not exploitation. (Anshari, 2024).

Islamic economic ontology highlights that all economic activities are rooted in the principles of monotheism, justice, and *maslahah*. These principles affirm that wealth is a trust from Allah, so that production, distribution, and consumption must be directed towards the common good (Nasutiona et al. 2024). In the contemporary context, this perspective provides an answer to the challenges of capitalism, which often leads to exploitation and ecological crises (Anshari, 2024).

The application of Islamic economic ontology is also in line with the idea of a green economy, where resource management is directed towards sustainability and intergenerational justice. In addition, the development of Islamic fintech can be a new instrument in promoting inclusive and transparent Islamic finance access. The principles of distributive justice, zakat, infaq, and the prohibition of usury contribute directly to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in reducing poverty, reducing inequality, and preserving the environment (Magfira et al. 2022).

3. Axiology in Islamic Economics

Axiology is a branch of philosophy that discusses the purpose of a particular field of knowledge, or in other words, answers the question of what that knowledge is used for. In the context of Islamic economics, the axiological approach highlights the value and usefulness of that knowledge. This approach is important for understanding how Islamic economics can play a role in solving various problems in people's daily lives. The main objective of Islamic economics is to achieve *falah*, which is happiness that encompasses both worldly and spiritual life. (Nahlah et al., 2024).

From an axiological perspective, Islamic economics aims to ensure that all human activities are based on devotion to Allah and the fulfilment of the mandate to prosper the earth (Fazira et al. 2025). Therefore, in carrying out economic activities, Muslims are required to maintain balance and environmental sustainability. The concept of happiness in Islam is not limited to worldly pleasures, but also includes happiness in the hereafter. Thus, Islamic economics must build a system that is not only capable of creating prosperity on earth, but also brings happiness to humans, both in this world and in the hereafter.

Axiology in Islamic economics emphasizes the values of ultimate goals (the hereafter), social justice, universal welfare, and long-term sustainability. These values form the basis of the Islamic economic system, which is oriented not only toward worldly prosperity but also toward happiness in the hereafter and socio-ecological balance. (Agustin et al., 2025). Clear evidence can be found in Hartati et al. (2024) which affirm that zakat and productive waqf, are not merely redistribution, but also empower the community's economy. For example, zakat is used for micro business capital, or waqf is used to fund community-based health and education services; these instruments play a role in poverty alleviation and welfare distribution. In addition, there is green sukuk, which is an environmentally-friendly Islamic financial instrument. Indonesia pioneered green sukuk in 2018 with a value of USD 1.25 billion, used to fund green infrastructure such as renewable energy, clean transportation, and clean water management. This demonstrates the synergy between *maqāṣid sharia* and ESG principles in supporting a sustainable economy (Siregar et al 2024). Furthermore, Sharia-based programs, such as the integration of a green economy approach in the implementation of zakat and waqf,

not only consider economic aspects but also social and environmental aspects, reflecting the holistic framework of maqāṣid (protection of religion, life, intellect, property, and lineage) (AdmienES 2025).

Theoretically, Islamic economics provides an axiological framework that rejects individualism and utilitarianism, and aims to build a fair, ethical, and sustainable economic system (Syauki et al. 2025). However, in practice, real challenges remain, such as low public literacy about green sukuk, a lack of specific regulations, and the complexity of integrating maqāṣid values into public policy. Thus, while Islamic economics as an axiological value system, has transformative potential, its success depends heavily on how Sharia instruments (such as productive zakat and green sukuk) are effectively applied, regulated, and understood by the public and integrated into public policy (Abu & Messe 2024).

D. CONCLUSION

Islamic economics has a unique philosophical foundation compared to conventional economics. Its epistemology is based on revelation combined with reason and empirical reality; its ontology affirms that economic activity is a form of worship and a mandate to prosper the earth; while its axiology is oriented towards falah, justice, maslahah, and sustainability. These three dimensions reinforce Islamic economics as a scientific discipline that is monotheistic, integrative, and transformative. Academically, this article contributes to enriching the study of Islamic economic philosophy by presenting a comprehensive analysis of epistemology, ontology, and axiology, as well as demonstrating the interconnection between the three in constructing a more applicable framework of thinking. For readers and practitioners, the main benefit of this article lies in understanding that Islamic economics extends beyond the normative level and can be applied in practice through instruments such as productive zakat, waqf, and green sukuk to address contemporary socio-economic challenges. Thus, this article is expected to serve as a reference in the development of a just, sustainable and globally relevant Islamic economic theory and practice.

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