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The Urgency of Time Utilization in Islamic Education: A Critical Study of Surah Al-‘Asr in the Qur’an

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ABSTRACT *This study examines the urgency of time utilization within the perspective of Islamic education through a critical analysis of Surah Al-‘Asr. The research aims to formulate a conceptual framework of time management grounded in Qur’anic values as a foundation for strengthening the quality of Islamic education. This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method, drawing on classical and contemporary Qur’anic exegeses, Islamic education literature, and relevant academic sources. Data were analyzed using content analysis and thematic interpretation to identify key educational values related to time. The findings reveal that time in the Qur’anic perspective is not merely a chronological dimension but a moral and spiritual trust that determines human success or failure. Surah Al-‘Asr outlines four fundamental principles—faith, righteous deeds, mutual exhortation to truth, and mutual exhortation to patience—as essential elements for optimizing time. These principles reflect core educational values, including discipline, productivity, social responsibility, and resilience. The study also highlights that effective time management is closely linked to the success of the learning process and the formation of students’ character. This study concludes that integrating Qur’anic values of time utilization into Islamic education can contribute to the development of a holistic educational model that balances cognitive, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Therefore, strengthening awareness and practice of time management based on Islamic principles is essential for addressing contemporary educational challenges. Future research is recommended to explore empirical applications of these values in educational institutions and their relevance in modern learning contexts.*

Keywords : Utilization, Time, Qur’an, Al-‘Asr, Islamic Education

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INTRODUCTION

Time encompasses the entirety of moments that have passed, are present, and are yet to come. It can be likened to a river that continuously flows across regions since ancient times, passing through islands, cities, and villages either inspiring human enthusiasm or lulling them into negligence. In reality, many people still overlook the importance of time (Arifin, 2022). Numerous individuals waste opportunities, procrastinate, and fail to make the best use of the time granted by Allah SWT (Harmalis, 2021). In fact, every passing second is a great blessing and gift, from opening one’s eyes in the morning to closing them at night.

The importance of time is so significant that acts of worship are closely tied to specific time frames (Nur Annisa et al., 2024). Performing acts of worship outside their prescribed times raises questions about their validity. For example, the obligation of prayer has clearly निर्धारित times as stated in Q.S. Al-Isra' [17]:78, which commands the performance of prayer from the decline of the sun until the darkness of the night, and the dawn prayer, which is witnessed by angels (Reza et al., 2023).

In the Qur'an, there are several chapters named after time, such as Surah Al-Fajr (dawn), Surah Ad-Duha (morning brightness), Surah Al-'Asr (time/afternoon), and Surah Al-Lail (night) (Anshori & Wasehudin, 2024). Each of these chapters conveys profound messages for humanity. Particularly in Surah Al-'Asr, Allah warns humans who are distracted by unhealthy competition, causing their time to pass without meaningful results. All humans are in a state of loss unless they utilize their time for righteous deeds (Kuswanto & Kurniawan, 2025).

The implementation and practice of Qur'anic teachings are crucial in building foundational values in daily life (Kurniawan, 2026), including in Islamic education. The goal of Islamic education is to instill and develop faith, piety, noble character (*akhlak al-karimah*), practical worship (*ibadah amaliyah*), and awareness of the optimal use of time (Faizudin et al., 2025). This study aims to examine the urgency of time utilization from the perspective of Islamic education through a critical study of Surah Al-'Asr.

Moreover, in the perspective of Islamic education, time is viewed as a trust (*amanah*) that must be preserved and accounted for (Hermawan, 2020). Every individual is required to realize that human life is limited by the time determined by Allah SWT (Saputra, 2025). This awareness should foster discipline, responsibility, and seriousness in carrying out life's duties. Thus, effective time management is not only a necessity but also a moral and spiritual obligation (Haqiah et al., 2025).

Proper time management is also closely related to the formation of students' character and personality. Islamic education emphasizes the importance of avoiding laziness, negligence, and procrastination, as these traits can hinder intellectual and spiritual development. Through habituation in valuing time, learners are expected to grow into disciplined, productive individuals with a strong work ethic (Wasehudin et al., 2021). This ultimately becomes a crucial asset in facing future life challenges.

Furthermore, time serves as a measure of the quality of human deeds. Every activity of a Muslim should be directed toward attaining the pleasure of Allah SWT by filling time with beneficial actions. In the educational context, this is reflected in learning activities, acts of worship, and social interactions carried out with sincere intentions and proper conduct. By understanding that time is a valuable opportunity that will never return, individuals are expected to maximize every moment to improve their quality of life, both spiritually and intellectually.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design, focusing on an in-depth examination of the concept of the urgency of time management within the framework of Islamic education through a critical analysis of the Qur'an, particularly *Surah Al-'Asr*. This approach is chosen because the object of the study is conceptual and normative in nature, requiring comprehensive exploration of both classical and contemporary Islamic literature.

The data sources in this study consist of secondary data derived from various relevant scholarly works, including classical and modern Qur'anic exegeses, Islamic education textbooks,

reputable journal articles, and other academic publications discussing the concept of time, ethical time management, and educational values in Islam. The primary exegetical references include the works of Tafsir Ibn Kathir and Tafsir Al-Misbah, which are utilized to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the meanings embedded in the verses.

Data collection is conducted through a systematic literature review across various sources, both printed and digital, such as Google Scholar, accredited national journal portals, and other scientific databases. The keywords used include “time management in Islam,” “Islamic education,” “interpretation of Surah Al-'Asr,” and “educational values in the Qur'an.” The collected literature is then carefully selected based on its relevance, credibility, and contribution to the research focus.

Data analysis is carried out using content analysis techniques combined with a thematic interpretation (tafsir maudhu'i) approach. Content analysis is used to identify, classify, and interpret key concepts related to the urgency of time from an Islamic educational perspective. Meanwhile, the thematic approach is applied to comprehensively explore the meanings of *Surah Al-'Asr* in relation to educational contexts. The stages of analysis include: (1) data reduction by selecting essential information, (2) categorization of themes such as time discipline, productivity, and responsibility, and (3) data synthesis to construct a systematic conceptual framework.

To ensure data validity, this study applies source triangulation by comparing interpretations from various Qur'anic commentators and Islamic education scholars. In addition, priority is given to sources with strong academic authority and peer-reviewed status, ensuring that the findings are credible and academically reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this study indicate that Surah Al-Fatihah contains a hierarchical and systematic structure of educational values. These values are not merely normative-theological in nature but also carry pedagogical implications that can serve as a foundation for the development of Islamic educational theory. Based on the thematic exegesis analysis of *Tafsir Al-Tabari*, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, and *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, each verse of Surah Al-Fatihah represents interconnected educational dimensions.

The findings of this study indicate that the concept of time in Islamic perspective, particularly as reflected in *Surah Al-'Asr*, encompasses a comprehensive and multidimensional meaning. Time is understood as the entire sequence of moments in which processes, actions, and conditions occur, including duration, specific opportunities, and cyclical divisions based on natural phenomena such as the movement of the sun and moon. The analysis reveals that time is dynamic and irreversible; once it passes, it cannot be reclaimed or replaced. This underscores the critical importance of utilizing time effectively in human life.

The results further show that time is positioned as the most valuable asset possessed by human beings. It functions not only as a temporal framework but also as the primary capital for all human activities. The value of time exceeds material wealth, as it directly constitutes human life itself. The way individuals utilize their time determines the quality of their existence: when used for reading, it generates wisdom; for thinking, it builds intellectual strength; for prayer, it brings spiritual blessings; for work, it leads to achievement; and for good deeds, it directs individuals toward ultimate success in the hereafter.

In addition, the findings indicate that human understanding of time is closely related to empirical experience and environmental observation, particularly through the cycles of the moon

and the sun. The Qur'anic perspective affirms structured temporal systems, such as the division of a year into twelve months as stated in Qur'an Surah At-Taubah verse 36. This reinforces the notion that time in Islam is both natural and divinely regulated.

The study also finds that the metaphor of the lunar cycle reflects the human life cycle, illustrating stages from birth, growth, maturity, decline, to eventual death. This analogy emphasizes the brevity of human life and the urgency of making meaningful use of time within its limited span.

From a linguistic and exegetical perspective, the term *'asr* is interpreted as "time," derived from a root meaning "to press" or "to extract," symbolizing the essence or value contained within time. According to M. Quraish Shihab, time is the fundamental capital of human life that must be filled with productive and positive activities. The findings confirm that classical and contemporary scholars generally agree on interpreting *'asr* as time in a broad sense, although some specify it as a particular period, such as the *العصر* (afternoon prayer time), or the era of the Prophet Muhammad.

Furthermore, the analysis identifies that the term *al-insān* (human) encompasses all human beings without exception, characterized by dynamism, forgetfulness, and the pursuit of happiness. Meanwhile, the term *kehusr* (loss), presented in an indefinite form, signifies profound and diverse forms of loss, including misguidance, failure, and destruction. The findings emphasize that all humans are inherently in a state of loss unless they fulfill four essential criteria outlined in *Surah Al-'Asr*: possessing true faith, performing righteous deeds, promoting truth, and upholding patience.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the concept of time in *Surah Al-'Asr* is not merely chronological but carries deep ethical, spiritual, and educational implications, highlighting time as a critical determinant of human success or failure.

Discussion

The findings indicate that a successful individual is one who is able to utilize opportunities effectively and strive to optimize the use of time. The Qur'an instructs humanity to make the best possible use of time (Wildan Setiawan, 2025), even guiding individuals to fill their time with beneficial deeds by maximizing all their capacities. In *Surah Al-'Asr*, four key elements are identified as safeguards against loss: faith, righteous deeds, mutual exhortation to truth, and mutual exhortation to patience (Riki et al., 2024).

The results further reveal various constructive activities for utilizing time productively, such as engaging in meaningful discussions, increasing reading and the pursuit of knowledge, participating in beneficial organizations, performing additional prayers including *qiyām al-layl* (Polyakov, 2024), engaging in remembrance (*dhikr*), limiting attendance at non-essential social events, associating with individuals who value time, and developing personal learning resources such as a home library. The Qur'anic perspective emphasizes not merely working, but working with sincerity, diligence, and full commitment.

In addition, the findings highlight that effective time management in Islam is grounded in self-discipline and awareness. Key principles include utilizing youth before old age, free time before busyness, health before illness, wealth before poverty, and life before death (Mujahidin et al., 2022). These principles form a foundational framework for Islamic time management.

The study also shows that the alternation of day and night, as described in Qur'an Surah Al-Isra verse 12 (Tamlekha, 2021), represents a sign of divine power and provides a practical structure for human life. Night serves as a time for rest, while day is designated for productive activity. This natural cycle contains several wisdoms: encouraging hope and reliance on God, motivating

righteous actions and increased devotion, prompting repentance, and reminding humans of mortality and the transient nature of life.

Furthermore, the findings confirm that time in the Qur'anic perspective holds a fundamental position in human existence. Time is not merely a chronological dimension but a trust (*amanah*) with spiritual and ethical value (Fatih & Bashori, 2025). This is reflected in the divine oath in *Surah Al-'Asr*, which emphasizes that time determines human success or loss. In this context, time becomes an indicator of the quality of life, where its optimal use leads to success, while its neglect results in existential loss.

The analysis of *Surah Al-'Asr* demonstrates that all human beings are in a state of loss (*kehurs*), except those who fulfill four essential criteria: faith, righteous deeds, mutual encouragement in truth, and mutual encouragement in patience. Qur'anic commentators offer varied interpretations of *al-'asr*, ranging from general time, specific periods, to phases of human life (Ferdinan et al., 2025). In Tafsir Ibn Kathir, time is understood as a witness to human actions, while Tafsir Al-Misbah emphasizes the reflective dimension of time as a space for actualizing faith and righteous deeds (Shihab, 2002). Thus, the verse provides not only a normative message but also an operational framework for managing time meaningfully and productively.

From the perspective of Islamic education, the findings indicate that *Surah Al-'Asr* contains highly relevant educational values. Time discipline emerges as a central principle, reflecting responsibility and commitment. The concept of righteous deeds highlights the importance of productivity in learning, encouraging students to produce meaningful contributions. The principle of *tawāṣaw* underscores constructive social interaction in educational processes, while *ṣabr* (patience) emphasizes resilience in facing learning challenges.

The study further shows that effective time utilization is closely linked to educational success. Time is a critical variable influencing the effectiveness of education (Mejía-Rodríguez & Kyriakides, 2022). Proper time management supports the achievement of educational goals, whereas poor management hinders both academic development and character formation. Therefore, the values embedded in *Surah Al-'Asr* serve as both normative and practical foundations for cultivating a disciplined, productive, and responsible learning culture.

Practically, the findings suggest that Islamic education systems should integrate time management values into curricula and learning processes. Teachers play a strategic role as role models in demonstrating effective time management, enabling students to internalize these behaviors. Additionally, instructional strategies should emphasize efficiency and productivity, including structured learning schedules and process-based evaluation.

In the modern era, the findings also highlight increasing challenges in time management, particularly due to digital distractions that affect students' focus and productivity (Anhusadar et al., 2026). This phenomenon reflects a broader crisis in time management that negatively impacts learning quality (Affuso et al., 2023). Therefore, the internalization of values derived from *Surah Al-'Asr* becomes highly relevant as a normative solution, which can be integrated with modern time management approaches to create more contextual and applicable educational strategies.

Overall, the study concludes that *Surah Al-'Asr* functions not only as a religious text but also as a philosophical foundation for Islamic education. The integration of theological and pedagogical values in understanding time is essential for developing a holistic educational system. Educational success is determined not only by cognitive achievement but also by ethical awareness in utilizing time wisely. Thus, the urgency of time management becomes a central element in improving the quality of Islamic education in a rapidly changing world.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the urgency of time utilization in Islamic education, as derived from *Surah Al-‘Asr*, lies in its function as a foundational framework for shaping a value-oriented and purpose-driven educational paradigm. Time is positioned as a determinant of human success that requires conscious management through the integration of faith, productive action, ethical awareness, and personal resilience. In this context, Islamic education is not merely concerned with knowledge transmission, but with cultivating disciplined, responsible, and morally grounded individuals who are able to navigate life meaningfully within temporal limitations. The findings also affirm that the Qur’anic perspective on time provides a conceptual basis for developing an education system that emphasizes balance between spiritual depth, intellectual growth, and social responsibility. This integrative approach strengthens the role of education as a transformative process that prepares individuals to optimize their potential while maintaining ethical accountability in both personal and collective dimensions. Future studies are recommended to expand this research through empirical approaches, particularly by examining how the values of time management derived from *Surah Al-‘Asr* are implemented in educational institutions such as schools, madrasahs, and pesantren. In addition, further research may explore the integration of Islamic time management principles with contemporary educational models, especially in addressing challenges posed by digital distractions and modern learning environments. Comparative studies across different cultural and educational contexts are also encouraged to enrich the theoretical and practical development of time-based educational frameworks in Islam.

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