

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38035/gijlss.v4i4><https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Received: 25 April 2026 | Revised: 24 May 2026 | Accepted: 17 August 2026

Reconstruction of Legal Research Methodology: An Epistemological Review of the Prophetic Law

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Abstract: There is the domination of the normative-dogmatic and juridical-empirical approaches in legal research design that tend to run in a dichotomy as well as the lack of an integration of the rational, contextual, and teleological dimensions in one holistic epistemological framework. There is a need for a methodological reconstruction model to bridge the coherence of the empirical verification and norm system and the orientation for substantive values. This research aims to reconstruct a prophetic legal epistemology-based legal research model through the integration of bayani, burhani, and irfani. Prophetic law is an ancient legal framework rooted in divine commandments, such as God's Ten Commandments to Moses, as well as Christian and Islamic laws, nowadays commonly referred to as religious law. The meaning of prophetic law is religious law from Abrahamic religions especially Islamic Law. This was qualitative research with a philosophical approach, using a content analysis method on methodological concepts to find the prophetic, empirical, and normative legal research model. Research gap in this article show that reconstruction is carried out through the stage of hierarchic harmonization and inventorying of norms, the strengthening of contextual and rational arguments, the usage of empirical examination as a falsification mechanism, as well as the application of intersubjective verification which ends in corroborative legitimacy. Theoretically, this research yields an integrative legal epistemological model that exceeds the normative-empirical dichotomy as well as places the law as an open system that is logically, empirically, and teleologically validated. Practically, this model provides a systematic and reflective design of legal research which orients towards public benefit and substantive justice.

Keywords: Prophetic Epistemology, Methodological Reconstruction, Coherence, Corroboration.

INTRODUCTION

Up to now, the design of legal research methodology is still trapped in a formal-logical rigidity that places the law as a closed system of norms, even though the dynamics of digital management and artificial intelligence have led to the epistemological pressure to understand the law in a more integrative manner (Dona, Ariyani, Junaidi, Zahriani, & Fattaah, 2025). There is a real gap between the existing methodological condition that tends to separate legal textual analysis from the spiritual, ethical, and value dimensions with the actual need to read legal norms as a living entity that interacts with digital power structures, data, and algorithms (Magesh et al., 2025). Contemporary legal problematics are complex and multidisciplinary, involving a technological reconstruction that is not value-neutral; thus, mere normative or socio-legal approaches are inadequate (Kataoka et al., 2025). The pressure to develop an ethical value-based, adaptive, and reflective methodological design becomes even stronger as the law no longer faces mere human subjects in its classical definition, as it also faces artificial intelligence, which produce decision biases and moral implications (Harradine, 2022).

This gap becomes even more visible when the normative-doctrinal approach tends to emphasize internal coherence and the formal validity of legal norms, such as through the testing of the legality principle and the systemic consistency of legal norms' internal dimension, without discovering the transcendental values and the spirituality dimension which form the socio-legal legitimacy (Harisanty & Anugrah, 2022). On the other hand, the socio-legal approach strives to capture the legal reality through social practices, even though it does not yet have an ethical-transcendental framework that is able to guide the normative interpretation of facts in an integrative manner to form social legitimacy (Blackham, 2022). As a consequence, when the law is faced with current issues, such as human rights in the biological and psychological dimensions that are linked to digital technologies and artificial intelligence, the design of legal research methodology shows its conceptual limitation (Harisanty & Anugrah, 2022). Due to its fragmented methodological design and an increasingly strengthening pressure to understand legal phenomena in an integrative manner, there is an urgency to reconstruct the design of legal research methodology that is able to synthesize the normative, empirical, ethical, and spiritual dimensions in one corroborative analytical framework (Zmigrod, 2022).

Apart from that, studies on the post-secular legal society declare the need for a synthesis of the legal, ethical, and spiritual perspectives to respond to this post-secular society (Olsen, 2024; Palomino Lozano, 2023; von Wussow, 2024). Studies on cybertorture (Hai, 2025) and neurorights (Ratto Trabucco, 2023; Ruiz, Valera, Ramos, & Sitaram, 2024) show that a sole normative approach is no longer adequate in reading the impacts of digital psychology on human dignity (Kataoka et al., 2025). The integration offered by several research articles above is still placed at the instrumental interdisciplinary level, while the formulation of methodological epistemology at the spirituality dimension is not yet perceived as a source of value and ethical orientation (Kataoka et al., 2025). Thus, the pressure to develop a methodological design that is able to combine norms, facts, ethics, and spirituality in one holistic framework has not been fully answered (Chucha, 2024; Gaitanidis, 2024).

Another gap is found in the study on technological management and Digital Services Act (Turillazzi, Taddeo, Floridi, & Casolari, 2023), which emphasizes evidentiary-based research and multi-actor dialogs (Saputra, 2025), but still operate in a secular-positivistic horizon (Echefu, 2026; Mal'ko, 2025; Zvyagintsev, 2025). Likewise, research on genetics (Dhirani, Mukhtiar, Chowdhry, & Newe, 2023), biotechnologies (Romanis, 2025) and emerging technologies (Dhirani et al., 2023) show the existence of a gap as contemporary legal problems exceed formal-juridical and empirical-juridical boundaries, aside from the fact that there is a lack of a systematic epistemological framework that is able to integrate the

normative, empirical, and spiritual dimensions in one methodological unity (Karaosmanoğlu, 2025). The actual pressure to understand such legal phenomena in an integrative manner is accumulated with the lack of a methodological construction that combines texts (norms), context (socio-technological reality), and spirituality (transcendental values) in one coherent research design, which is the main focus of this paper (Calluori et al., 2025). Therefore, the methodological reconstruction that is based on text, context, and spirituality are strategic agendas in providing a normative and ethical foundation for the development of legal research that is responsive towards challenges related to the digital, biotechnological, and artificial intelligence realms (Karaosmanoğlu, 2025).

Due to the fact that methodological reconstruction demands an epistemological framework that has been systematically tested and applied in many fields, such as information *fiqh* (the study of Islamic law) in the digital sector and water *fiqh* in the environmental sector, as an alternative, the Muhammadiyah *manhaj tarjih* is chosen as a bridge between them. Apart from that, this coherent, tiered, and corroborative integration model is supported by the availability of expansive literature that are systematically documented, allowing the analysis to be carried out in a schematic manner, starting from the conceptual basis to its methodological operationalization.

Epistemologically, the Muhammadiyah *manhaj tarjih* has four characteristics that have been adopted into the legal epistemology through the analysis of Wardiono (2025). First, the Muhammadiyah *manhaj tarjih* works with a methodological framework that is not only text-based, but also an integration between the textual, contextual, and ethical-spiritual dimensions, as concluded in the study of economic fatwa evolution of the *Tarjih* and *Tajdid* Council (1950–2017) (Ikhwandu, 2024). This framework is more suitable than other Islamic legal epistemological models or general socio-legal approaches. Because with the Muhammadiyah *manhaj tarjih*, the strong textual tradition is then combined with the authority verification and source validity approaches; thematic analysis; as well as corroborative articulation that proves the existence of an internal falsification mechanism, i.e., the legal selection, verification, and argumentation processes before a fatwa or a legal decision is made (Ahmad, 2025). Because with this method, religious norms and doctrines are not simply swallowed up but are analyzed and pondered deeply by scholars who are experts in both religion and knowledge.

Second, the use of the *ushul fiqh* framework and the shift from *mazhabi fiqh* to *manhaji fiqh* show a concrete coherence in carrying out the construction and harmonization of norms in a systematic manner (through the hierarchic arrangement of argumentation and the rationalization of preference); thus, the normative integration maneuvers in a transformative manner to achieve a theocentric orientation that is not trapped in methodological eclecticism (Wahdini, 2025).

Third, the incommensurability principle is also apparent in the scrutiny of the collegiality forum (Romanis, 2025). It is especially used to link classical authority with contemporary problems, such as modern economic issues, without carrying out conceptual anachronism (Ikhwandu, 2024; Zulian, 2025).

Fourth, the downstream reflects the principle of epistemological holism, where legal texts are understood through maxim legal instruments (*ushul*); context is read through an aiding instrument, i.e., social sciences; and spirituality is read through teleological ethics that is corroborated with text on legal and social sciences (Romanis, 2025).

Based on the description above, this research focuses on reconstructing the legal research design, as the empirical normative model is deemed no longer adequate to answer the complexity of contemporary law (Koslow, 2019). Globally, the main current of legal methodology still inflexibly separates the stage of the discovery of norms (normative-doctrinal), the rational-empirical analysis (socio-legal), and the deepening of values; thus,

there is no methodological mechanism that is able to simultaneously test norms in the hierarchic, rational, and teleological-spiritual dimensions (Correa-Martínez, Báez-Mesa, Blanco-Alvarado, Echeverry-Botero, & Angulo-Name, 2025).

This means that there is an epistemological void: the law is analysed as a formal system or a social fact, but not as a system of meaning that is oriented towards *maqāṣid*, namely the goals of Allah and His prophets in determining the Islamic law (teleological) and *maslahah*, which means benefit. As a response towards this limitation, this paper offers a Muhammadiyah *manhaj tarjih* epistemology which integrates legal texts (*bayani*), socio-legal context (*burhani*), and spirituality-ethics, as an alternative methodological foundation. Different from previous studies, which partially integrate disciplinary integration, this approach formulates this integration in one coherent and cross-approach operational framework. Its theoretical contribution is placed at the formulation of the holistic and prophetic legal research model: norms are not only tested from their formal validity and empirical relevance aspects, but also from their teleological-spiritual orientation. Therefore, the legal research design shifts from merely normative-empirical to an integrative-corroborative paradigm that orients towards substantive justice.

The model offered is a holistic and prophetic legal research model. It is called holistic because legal research does not only examine law from a single dimension (for example, norms), but rather combines several dimensions simultaneously: The normative dimension (*bayani*) its meaning legal texts, the Qur'an, hadith, regulations, doctrines. The empirical-social dimension (*burhani*) means social facts, societal realities, empirical data and the spiritual-teleological dimension means the objectives of sharia (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*), ethical values, and public welfare. The operational design employs a corroborative sequence integrating bayani analysis of legal texts, burhani examination of socio-legal realities, and teleological-spiritual assessment through *maqāṣid* and *maslahah*. Rather than treating these dimensions separately, the model places them in a mutually validating process to produce substantively just legal conclusions. Therefore, law is not merely understood as a formal rule or social phenomenon, but as a system of meaning with moral-spiritual goals.

This model is called "prophetic" because its orientation follows the prophetic mission: justice, humanity, and public welfare.

Literature Review

This legal epistemology-based study of research method reconstruction will firstly describe the positioning review as a methodological approach of legal research that develops to have its limitations identified. Meanwhile, the legal epistemology of prophetic law is positioned as a synthesis offering between textual authority (*bayani*), the rationality-contextual aspect (*burhani*), and the spirituality-teleological dimension (*maqāṣid*). Review results of epistemic construction, methodological instrument, and their integrative patterns will help answer how the legal epistemology of Muhammadiyah *manhaj tarjih* is when designed as a reconstruction of legal research method that is substantive justice-oriented, integrative, holistic, and corroborative.

The epistemological framework of prophetic law, as developed by Wardiono's research (2025), was built on a historical-epistemic structure that places falsification as the entrance of deconstruction (Naim, 2024). This principle is directed to disassembling pseudo-adequacy (Azni et al., 2025), i.e., the tendency to place the formal validity of formation legality and interpretation of legal norms (Naim, 2024). Through intersubjective and rational testing, norms are not only verified from their hierarchical aspect, but also criticized from the aspects of their moral content and orientation. Therefore, the prophetic legal epistemology applies the falsification principle as a methodological mechanism to deconstruct the closed normative

positivism and opens a teleology-based room for correction (K. Wardiono, 2019; Kelik Wardiono, Isman, Rochman, Yuspin, & Junaidi, 2025).

After the deconstruction process, its epistemological structure maneuvers at the coherence principle as a mechanism to combine and rank norms. Here, this coherence does not stop at the logical-formal consistency, but ensures that every norm obtains systemic support from other norms that are substantially aligned (Azni et al., 2025). In the epistemological context of prophetic law, this is operationalized through the *tarjih* mechanism, i.e., a selection and preference of arguments that combine texts, principles, and values in one epistemic network. Coherence becomes an integration foundation between normativity (positivity), contextuality (rationality-empirical), and prophetic ethics, so that there is no fragmentation between the law as regulations and the law as values.

The third principle is incommensurability, which functions to linking two different conceptual horizons without becoming trapped in anachronism (Azni et al., 2025). In the historical exploration of norms, the prophetic legal epistemology realizes the different epistemic ecosystem between the Islamic law with a natural law paradigm (Azni et al., 2025), and the positive law with a legal positivism paradigm (Azni et al., 2025). With this approach, the shift is no longer focused on mere normative content, but on the paradigm that gives birth to it. Incommensurability allows the achievement of interconnection integration without a distortion of meaning, as what bridges it is its epistemological framework, rather than its terminology (Azni et al., 2025). Therefore, revelation and positive legal norms are understood as entities which have a similar legitimacy mechanism in creating ethical boundaries, even if they are sourced from different traditions.

This whole process achieves its form in the holism principle, i.e., the sustainable integration between text (*bayani*), context (*burhani*), and spirituality (*irfani*). Holism in the prophetic legal epistemology is not a mere rejection of norm reductionism, but rather an epistemological concept which ensures that the impacts of norms are holistically analysed from the normative, empirical, psychological, and spiritual aspects. In this framework, legal epistemology does not stop at rational validity, but maneuvers to achieve the theanthropocentric orientation, where the law is understood as an instrument that forms a civilized and just civilization (Azni et al., 2025).

The key to this integration is holistic corroboration, which borrows the *qath'iy* conception in al-Muwafaqat al-Syatibi as a basis for the corroboration legitimacy (Azni et al., 2025). This means that normative truth does not stand on a single normative guideline, but is strengthened by inter-argument support that is convergent from the textual, rational, and spiritual aspects. With this model, the prophetic legal epistemology applies a synthesis between falsification, coherence, incommensurability, and holism in one applicative methodological building (Wardiono et al., 2025).

METHOD

This research was a qualitative research with a philosophical approach, which understands the law not merely as normative texts or social facts, but rather as a layered conceptual construction, which encompasses basic values, general principles, and concrete norms in one epistemological framework (Azni et al., 2025). The philosophical approach is used to analyse the epistemological foundation from the legal research design, especially in applying the *bayani* (textuality), *burhani* (rationality), and *irfani* (spiritual-meaning dimension) approaches as a basis to reconstruct the legal research methodology (Habibi, 2023). Therefore, the law is analysed as a system of ideas with a logical structure, teleological objective, and value orientation that may be browsed through conceptual reflection and their philosophical argumentation.

The method used was content analysis on key concepts in the research approaches, such

as the normative approach, juridical-empirical approach, and prophetic legal epistemology-based reconstruction model (Redhani, 2024). The data were collected using library research by analysing academic documents, theories on the legal research methodology, as well as conceptual formulation on the inventorying, harmonization, rationalization, systemic integration, and intersubjective verification stages. In the philosophical framework, the data collection technique is focused on the identification of key concepts, the relation between concepts, the argumentation structure, as well as the epistemic assumption that becomes its basis. Thus, the analysed data are in the form of preposition, premises, and theoretic construction (Emery, 2023).

The authors employed descriptive-analytical and coherent techniques of analysis, namely by testing the inter-preposition internal consistence, browsing the inter-concept hierarchic link, as well as identifying the meeting point and disharmony between the approaches (Henderi, 2023). Data triangulation was carried out through an inter-perspective comparison, i.e., the normative, empirical, and prophetic perspectives, to ensure the accuracy of conceptual interpretation as well as avoid single biases (Blackham, 2022). Meanwhile, the concluding technique is carried out in an inductive-reflective manner by drawing a conceptual generalization from consistent argumentation patterns, as well as in a deductive-coherent manner by assessing conclusion validity based on the harmony between the epistemological premise, methodological structure, and their normative implications (Taekema, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this era, the epistemological constellation of legal research design is still dominated by legal positivism, especially in the normative-dogmatic approach. Positivism places the law as an autonomous system of norms whose validity is determined by formal procedures and hierarchy of legal norms. Thus, its superiority is placed in its systemic analysis, legal certainty, and systemic coherence (Wardiono et al., 2024). This model is in line with regulatory capacity strengthening, especially in the aspect which passes inventorying and synchronization of legal norms (Rohman, Aidy, Hutagalung, & Fajarwati, 2024). However, its limitation is that this model maintains the neutrality dogma and the legal division of morality is categorized into the transcendental dimension. Thus, it does not provide a methodological instrument to integrate teleological and substantive justice values in its research design (Blackham, 2022).

On the other hand, the legal post-positivism approach (Romanis, 2025), with its establishment on normativity-criticality and the interpretative socio-legal approach, with its establishment on law as a socially-constructed meaning, both develop on a vision of rejection and single objectivism (Correa-Martínez et al., 2025). This epistemology acknowledges the plurality of meaning and places researchers as interpretative subjects in understanding the law as a social construct. Its advantages are placed on the sensitivity of context and social dynamics, as well as the production of the law's meaning. (Nugrah., 2022)

However, as shown in recent literature, this approach still operates in a secular-critical horizon and has not developed an explicit integration between revelation, ratio, and transcendental values as an epistemic source; thus, ethical spirituality is not institutionalized in its methodological framework (Karaosmanoğlu, 2025). Meanwhile, the most recent literature written by Poddar (2025) on the legal research methodology reviewed from the genealogical aspect (Poddar, 2025), the offered model has more foundational and pedagogic characters, and operationally, has not answered the need for ethical spiritual integration and the legal transcendental dimension (Correa-Martínez et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, legal realism, which becomes the foundation to the socio-legal approach,

positions the law as a practice that is influenced by social, political, and psychological factors. Its advantages are its capability to uncover the illusion of legal neutrality and disclose how decisions are produced in an empirical reality (Cohen & Bodansky, 2025). However, legal realism tends to be reductionist, as it prioritizes social facts without the normative-transcendental framework that guides its ethical orientation (Nope, 2025). The law is read as an institutional behaviour, rather than as a value system which has a teleological dimension (Rohman et al., 2024).

In the meantime, Critical Legal Studies (CLS) states that the law is loaded with ideology and power relations (Henderi, 2023). The advantages of this approach are its capability to deconstruct the claim of objectivity as well as open the room for morality and substantive justice (Henderi, 2023). However, as reflected in the literature, transcendental legal criticism is still positioned from the critical perspective, rather than as a research methodology that is operational and tiered. CLS also has the same fate, as it stops on deconstruction without offering an integrative methodological design which is systematic for the stage of discovery of norms, contextual analysis, and the deepening of values in legal norms (Baumgardner, 2024).

For the moment, not many legal transcendental concepts have stood on the framework of Islamic epistemology (Lundberg & Söderman, 2025): including how to explain the stages of discovering norms, social context capacity, and deepening of spiritual meaning in one legal research framework (Lundberg & Söderman, 2025). On the other hand, the Muhammadiyah *manhaj tarjih* epistemology emerges. It explicitly integrates text (*bayani*), context (*burhani*), and spirituality and the spiritual meaning of law (*irfani*) in one tiered methodological framework (Fauzi, 2019). Thus, integrating it in legal research methodology becomes an effort that is important to carry out for further development of the legal research method (Fanani, Hamzani, Khasanah, & Sofanudin, 2021; Hidayat, 2017; Rachmadhani, Mochammad Sahid, & Wifaq Mokhtar, 2022), such as by offering an applicative and intersubjective integration model. One of these efforts has been carried out through a legal epistemological research based on the Muhammadiyah *Manhaj tarjih* (Wardiono et al., 2025). Therefore, it opens room for epistemic synthesis, which bridges the trap of methodological exclusivism to an integrated, intersubjective, and relevant legal research method model for the development of legal studies (Qibtiyah, 2023; Riyanto, Saefudin, & Suryo, 2022).

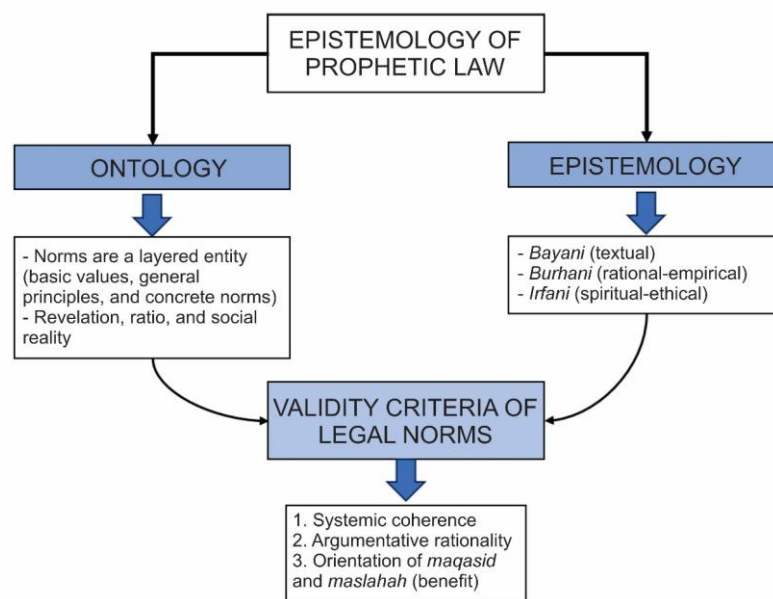


Figure 1. The Epistemology of Prophetic Law

The prophetic legal epistemology becomes the entrance of integration by rearranging the ontology and source of legal knowledge. Norms are understood as a tiered entity that comprises basic values, general principles, and concrete norms sourced from revelation, reason, and social reality. At the integration side, there is an internal restructuring, where the positivistic paradigm shifts to become theanthropocentric; the theory of autonomous law becomes a teleological-tiered structure; the normative-formalistic method is expanded to become rational-causal and teleological; and technical procedures are developed through harmonization and collective verification. Meanwhile, the interconnection side works through the usage of other sciences for complementation, confirmation, contribution, and comparison, so that texts, ratio, and social facts test each other in a corroborative framework without eliminating the legal discipline's identity.

By applying content analysis on the main concepts of prophetic legal epistemology, there can be a description of an integration-hierarchical model and intersubjective verification on legal norms that are up-streamed on corroborative legitimacy, as described below:

"The applied inventorying activity is not merely to find concrete legal norms, but must also be arranged in a hierarchical manner, where the first layer consists of basic values, the second layer consists of general principles, and the last layer consists of concrete legal norms. There must be a certainty on how many norms which have been identified obtain support from other norms that have the same meaning. Thus, one will obtain a holistic understanding of the aforementioned norms" (Wardiono et al., 2025).

The description above shows that from the start, the reconstruction of the legal research methodology cannot stop at textual identification (*bayani*), but demands the reciprocal support of norms in one systemic structure. With corroboration, the validity of norms does not stand alone (Ibrahim, 2017), as it is strengthened by other laws. The integrative concept will become clearer at the harmonization stage:

"The synchronization-level test is not only carried out on concrete legal norms, but is carried out according to the character of legal norms in prophetic legal studies that is arranged in a hierarchic manner. Thus, the synchronization level test also needs to be carried out to see its alignment with basic values and general principles" (Wardiono et al., 2025).

This means that the alignment of every norm is tested not only against the laws one level above or under it, but also against basic values and general principles. The legal research approach is no longer partial, but rather systematic, hierarchical, and coherent. In the context of a juridical-normative legal research approach, it is not enough to test regulations through conventional legal reasoning as they must also be tested through layered synchronization that corroborate each other to form a work pattern that is identical with the degree of confirmation cycle in epistemology (Ibrahim, 2017).

The main concept that is often applied is the strengthening of rational argumentation through abstraction, conceptualization, and systemic integration.

"At this stage (contextualization), there is a shift in focus from merely 'what does the law say' (Bayani) to 'why does the law say so and how does it logically work' (Burhani). The goal is to develop an argument that is not only textually valid, but also rationally strong and contextually relevant" (Wardiono et al., 2025).

This means that a norm's truth does not only come from the fact that it is written, as it must be rational, logical, and contextual. This process shows a form of rational corroboration, as texts (*bayani*) are strengthened by logical argumentation (*burhani*); thus, there is the strengthening of the cross-epistemic approach. The methodological finding is that this

epistemology-based legal research has a multi-validation characteristic: texts are verified by ratio, and ratio is limited by value structures. Further, this conceptual integration is reconfirmed through dialogues and systemic integration.

"At this stage, the newly formulated concept (from point b) cannot stand alone. It must be tested and reintegrated into the hierarchical structure of prophetic law that has been identified in Stage 1... If aligned, this new concept is integrated into the system, enriched with an understanding towards existing general principles and basic values. If there is a potential friction, there needs to be rationalization and reinterpretation to create harmony" (Wardiono et al., 2025).

This means that rather than atomistic, the offered legal research approach has a dialogical, integrative, and coherent character. The peak of this corroboration concept is seen from the collective verification mechanism (Ibrahim, 2017). This means that the prophetic law-based legal research reconstruction modelling is an analytical framework that is applied based on testing each other, strengthening each other, and intersubjective verification (*ijtihad jama'i*). In this systematic legal research framework, it means that scientific procedures encompass inventorying, harmonization, rationalization, integration, up to collective verification as a set of intact methodology (Bracho-Fuenmayor, 2025).

The normative approach is placed as a formulation of tentative argumentation. Legal principles, systematics, vertical-horizontal synchronization, legal considerations, and legal history form a theoretical construction on how the law *should* apply. Here, the law is understood as a proportional system that is coherent and hierarchical. However, in the corroboration model, the results of this normative analysis are not treated as the final truth, but rather as an initial formulation that is ready to be tested. This means that inter-regulatory harmony and legal principle consistency cannot guarantee its substantive validity before it is tested in the social context.

Next, the empirical approach is a critical testing media (Bracho-Fuenmayor, 2025). Legal effectiveness, social behaviour, identification of unwritten law, the performance of legal institutions, as well as social impact, become instruments to test whether the formulated legal norms truly work as assumed (Schwanhäuser, Sakshaug, & Kosyakova, 2022). If any ineffectiveness, social resistance, or distortion in the implementation is found, it functions as a potential falsifier for the construction of previous norms (Schwanhäuser et al., 2022). In other words, social reality becomes a testing ground for the claim regarding the law's rationality, rather than a mere descriptive-explanative complement.

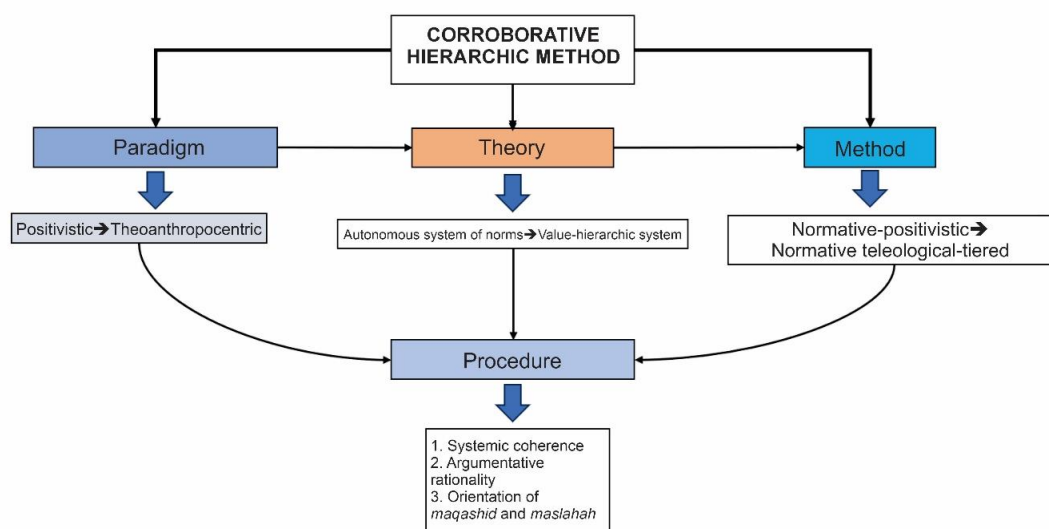


Figure 2. The Corroborative Hierarchic Method

Based on the scheme in Figure 2 above, it can be described that the hierarchic-corroborative method places the validity of legal norms as a result of tiered testing. Norms are tested from systemic coherence, argumentative rationality, up to the *maqāsid* orientation; the more layers that support texts, ratio, social facts, and collective legitimacy, the stronger the quality of validity. At the integration side, there is an internal restructuring, the positivistic paradigm shifts to the theoanthropocentric; the autonomous norm theory becomes a teleological-tiered structure; the normative-positivistic method develops into a rational-causal analysis; and the technical procedure is expanded to collective verification and harmonization. Meanwhile, the interconnection side works by utilizing the analysis of other disciplines without changing the identity of the legal discipline; thus, validity is formed through a systematic cross-strengthening process.

The corroboration process happens when the empirical findings do not directly annul norms, but also trigger error elimination through revision, re-harmonization, reinterpretation, or recontextualization of legal principles (Przhilenskiy, 2024). If research data conclude that legal norms fail to achieve effectiveness or lead to negative social impacts, a doctrinal adaptation is carried out, either through systematic renewal, reconstruction of principles, and reformulation of legal norms. On the contrary, if the data analysis results show that the legal norms are systematically consistent and proven to be socially effective, they obtain a higher degree of strengthening (corroboration) (Scheibe, 2022).

This corroboration approach model results in a provisional and dynamic acceptance (Ibrahim, 2017). The law is understood as an open system that keeps on being tested by social change. This approach exceeds the normative-empirical dichotomy by making it one cycle of problem-solving, i.e., legal norms are formulated rationally, tested in practice, and accepted so long as that legal norm can endure doctrinal criticisms or social reality (Darsyah, 2021).

Discussion

To further discuss the finding results above using the legal research approach in general, the authors firstly describe the conceptual analysis to discover what concepts have correlative, functional, as well as reciprocal relationships between prophetic legal epistemology-based legal researches and approaches of mainstream legal research (Omodan, 2025). First, conceptually, the prophetic legal epistemology-based legal research model is dominated by the concept of “grading” or “phasing” and “legal norms”, the two are the main poles of prophetic legal studies’ construction that is structured in three large phases, namely findings, argumentation strengthening, and the deepening of meaning (Wardiono et al., 2025). The hierarchy of norms concept is also highly central, as stated that, “concrete legal norms must be hierarchically arranged, with the first layer consisting of basic values, the second layer consisting of general principles, and the last layer consisting of the concrete legal norms.”

Meanwhile, unique concepts, such as inventorying, vertical and horizontal synchronization, abstraction, conceptualization, systemic integration, teleology/*maqasid*, *mashlahah ‘ammah*, up to the philosophical-spiritual contemplation show that this prophetic legal epistemology-based model of legal research reconstruction does not only have a procedural-methodological dimension, but also an epistemological one (Bayani–Burhani–Irfani). This is proven by the fact that the dominantly-applied concept in the reconstruction context is systemic, hierarchic, and rational, as well as teleological and spiritual.

By utilizing a content analysis approach, it can be concluded that there is a strong correlative relationship between the strengthening of rational argumentation and the legitimacy degree of legal norms, even though they do not automatically show a single causality. The prophetic legal epistemology-based model of legal research requires that

“.....there is a shift from merely ‘what does the law say’ (Bayani) to ‘why does the law say so and how does it logically work’ (Burhani).”

The aim is to build an argument that is not only textually valid but also rationally strong and contextually relevant. This means that when the logical analysis and rationalization variables increase, there is a stronger quality of collective acceptance and normative legitimacy, as strengthened through the mechanisms of the “Test of Criticism and Falsification” as well as “Collective Conclusion (*Ijtihad Jama’i*)”. However, this correlation does not arbitrarily prove that rationality becomes the only cause of legitimacy, as there are still other variables, such as the integration of basic values, *maqasid*, and public *maslahah* (benefit).

Meanwhile, the one-directional causal relationship can clearly be seen between the inventorying and synchronization processes with the creation of a legal norm consistency. In the prophetic legal epistemology-based legal research model, it is described that, “*The test of vertical synchronization level to test the alignment and the lack of conflict between hierarchically lower-level regulations and higher-level regulations that regulate relatively the same object*” as well as “*The test of horizontal synchronization level focuses on the consistency between regulations placed at the same level.*” In this construction, synchronization testing (independent) functionally correlates with the consistency and harmony of norms (dependent). Likewise, the “*maqasid analysis*” which assesses the impact of norms towards “the protection of the religion, the soul, the mind, the offspring and the wealth” functionally determine whether norms are strengthened or revised, so that the teleological analysis becomes a determinant towards the operational validity of norms (Ningsih, 2024).

Next, a reciprocal relationship can be seen in the abstraction-conceptualization process with a systemic integration in the hierarchic structure of prophetic law. The prophetic legal epistemology-based legal research model states, “*This new concept (for example: ‘personal data protection as a form of privacy’) is ‘dialoged’ with the norms above it. Is it aligned with general principles (second layer)? If so, this new concept is integrated into the system, to enrich the understanding of existing general principles and basic values.*” In this relationship, the new concept influences the redefinition of general principles, while the general principles simultaneously limit and form the new concept’s validity. The reciprocal relationship also happens between social contexts and norms, as stated, “How does that law interact with social, economic, political, and cultural factors in that era?” This means that changes in context influence the interpretation of norms, and in turn, the application of norms simultaneously form social dynamics.

Conceptually, every approach, including legal positivism, post-positivism, legal realism, and CLS, has epistemic structures that determine the direction and limit of its analysis (Chao, Xu, Tamò-Larrieux, Garcia, & Kollnig, 2024). For instance, positivism “places the law as an autonomous system of norms whose validity is determined by formal procedures and hierarchy of legal norms,” while realism “positions the law as a practice that is influenced by social, political, and psychological factors” (Fuady, 2013). This relationship shows a one-direction causal relationship, where the epistemological root will form a methodological design, which then determines the type of variable deemed relevant.

This means that the above prophetic law-based legal research model strengthens the conclusion that there is no methodology that is epistemically neutral (Campbell, 2021). The prophetic law-based legal research model also maintains legal research approach concepts, such as inventorying and synchronization of norms in positivity that “are aligned with the strengthening of the regulatory capacity.” This means that some conventional methodological aspects are compatible with rational-hierarchical structure offered by the prophetic law-based legal research model (Campbell, 2021).

Even so, part of the key concept in the prophetic law-based legal research model cannot be readily applied in empirical legal research. This can be analysed through the relationship characteristics and the direction of influence between key concepts. The *bayani* approach that stops at textual authority has a one-direction relationship with texts (Anwar, 2020), norms, and decisions, without opening room for the empirical variable as a potential falsifier. This happens even though the corroborative model states that “the empirical approach is an arena of critical testing. If ineffectiveness, social resistance, or distortion can be found in its implementation, they function as potential falsifiers of the previous normative construction.”

Therefore, based on the direction of variables’ influence (epistemology, methodology, and validity) and the one-way functional relationship pattern in the epistemic foundation, as well as the reciprocal relationship between norms and reality at the texting stage, the key sentence to understand the prophetic law-based legal research model is legal positivism, legal realism, post-positivism, and CLS are each formed by the epistemic foundation which determine the limits to their analysis. In this case, legal positivism is rooted in normative-procedural objectivism; realism on sociological empiricism; and the critical approach on ideological deconstruction (Dimyati et al., 2021). Therefore, the meeting point is placed on the aspect of inventorying of norms, vertical-horizontal synchronization, hierarchic systematics, and the usage of logical rationality. Likewise, the empirical approach that makes social reality a testing arena has a point of tangency with the mechanisms of “critical testing” and falsification in the corroborative model (Redhani, 2024).

Therefore, reconstruction is not the whole building of conventional legal research methodology, but rather the direction and depth of its integration (Nope, 2025). In normative research, what is reconstructed is the expansion from mere formal coherence to layered coherence which links concrete norms with basic values and general principles in an explicit manner, including teleological testing (*maqasid*) and the moral-transcendental dimension. In empirical research, what is deconstructed is the reductionist orientation; social facts no longer stand as an autonomous variable that breaks legal norms, but as testers (potential falsifiers) that trigger revision, harmonization, and reinterpretation in a value framework.

This means that the meeting point between the prophetic legal research model and the conventional legal research model is placed on the systemic logics and rational-empirical verification, while the meeting point that requires reconstruction is an integration of the dimensions of basic values, legal objective, and spiritual meaning to the methodological cycle (Jiang, 2022). The prophetic legal model does not eliminate normative and empirical approaches, but rather reposition them into one integrative cycle. Normative law is firstly formulated in a systemic manner; tested by new findings on the social context as an aiding tool; revised through rationalization; and oriented on basic values and the law’s teleological goal (Lutfi & Nur, 2022).

Implication and Recommendation

To explain the practical theoretical implication of the reconstruction of the prophetic legal epistemology-based legal research methodology above, the description will be elaborated using the framework of the four characteristics of the Muhammadiyah *manhaj tarjih* that has been described in the previous chapter. At the conceptual level, there is a conceptual refinement of the term “norm”, which is no longer defined merely as positive law, but as an entity of knowledge from a womb with a layered structure consisting of basic values, general principles, and concrete norms (Bueno, 2025). The operational definition is confirmed through the stages of hierarchic inventorying and vertical-horizontal synchronization, so that the norms may be observed from the aspect of systemic consistency, argumentative rationality, and the teleological orientation (Maftuhin, 2022). Here, integration

can clearly be seen, as texts (*bayani*), ratio (*burhani*), and spirituality (*irfani*) are placed within one methodological framework.

The second implication is the restructuring of paradigms and methods. The legal paradigm, which was originally positivistic and emphasizes formal validity, is restructured to become a theanthropocentric paradigm that links norms with *maqāṣid* and public benefit. Such changes even touch the theoretical system, i.e., from the autonomous system of norms to a value-hierarchic system; the method shifts from the single legal reasoning to rational-causal and teleological analysis; and the technical procedures shift from mere inventorying to layered harmonization and collective verification.

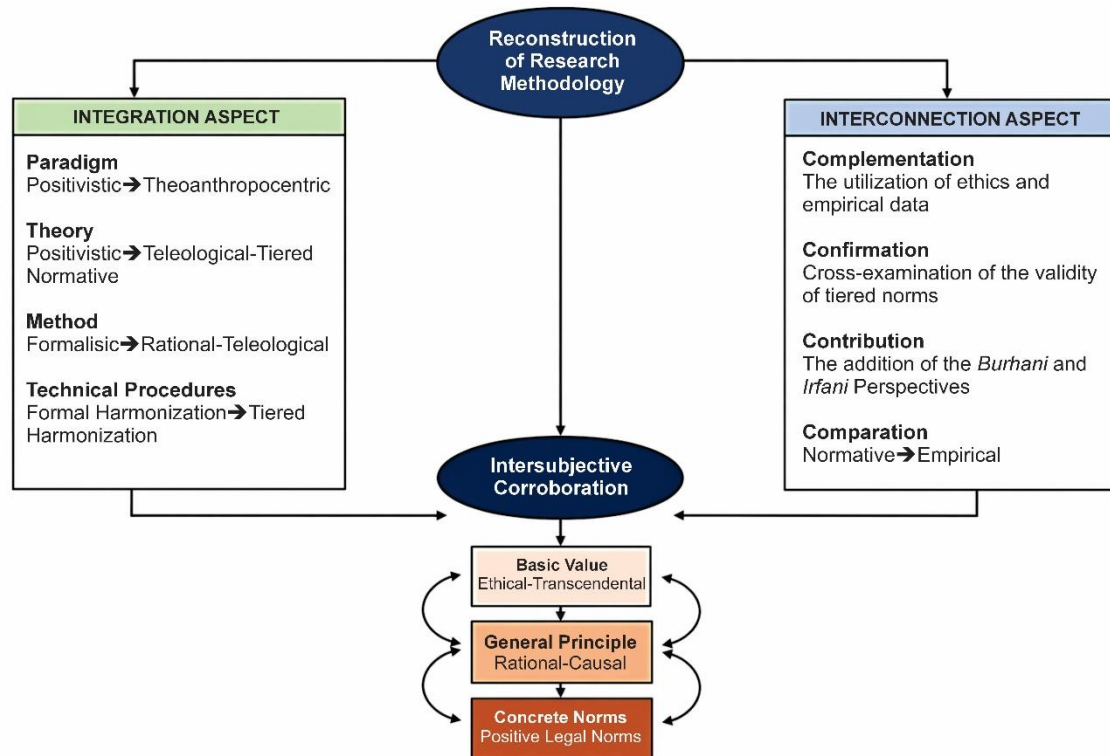


Figure 3. Reconstruction: The Contexts of Integration and Interconnection

Based on the scheme in Figure 3 above, it can be seen that the functional relationship is seen when the methodological reconstruction flows from the restructuring of paradigms, theories, methods, and technical procedures to intersubjective corroboration as a validation mechanism. Corroboration is the gravitational center of validity methodology as it functions as a functional, correlative, and reciprocal mechanism which forms the validity of norms. Functionally, corroboration flows from methodological reconstruction to the tiered testing of basic values, general principles, and concrete norms. Correlatively, corroboration is linked with paradigms, theories, methods, and procedures in one cycle that strengthen each other. Reciprocally, corroboration is linked with text, ratio, and social facts that frame test each other. Integration happens through an internal restructuring of the shift in paradigms, theoretical reformulation, methodical transformation, and procedural harmonization. However, not all aspects have been fully integrated (Syamsul, 2003). In the juridical-empiric model, the prophetic legal research model still positions social reality as a critical testing arena; thus, the social studies and *burhani* elements function as complementary tester, rather than as an ontological foundation that is equal with transcendental values and texts. This shows that there is an issue at the ontological level. An integration of paradigm has occurred, but the inter-disciplinary ontological integration has not been fully completed.

Meanwhile, at the interconnection side, the prophetic legal research model expands the perspective through interdisciplinary complementation and confirmation. Legal norms are understood through legal maxims, context is analysed with the instruments of social studies, and spirituality is read through teleological ethics. This is in line with the perspective of Anwar (2020), that interconnection acts as data usage and analysis of other disciplines for comparison and confirmation without changing the basic structure of that legal discipline itself. The proof of this interconnection is also shown in the usage of legal history, social analysis, and *maslahah* considerations of the validity of norms.

This interconnection is strengthened through a logical linking between the concept that norms are linked to rationalization, empirical testing, collective verification, and the *maqāṣid* orientation. This chain of logics avoids the logical gap, as every stage has the functions of confirmation and falsification. Meanwhile, the “corroboration” concept becomes a connecting knot which explains how texts are verified by ratio, ratio is tested by social facts, and social facts are framed by basic values. Here, it can be seen that interconnection works as a mechanism of cross-confirmation, rather than as structural restructuring (Anwar, 2020).

Another implication that is no less important is the reconstruction of the prophetic legal epistemology-based legal research methodology, which has an addition of a new variable, namely the spiritual and teleological dimensions, which show that this model enriches previous theories. If the normative approach only assesses the system’s consistency and the empirical approach assesses social effectiveness, the prophetic model adds a variable of ethical-transcendental orientation as an evaluative dimension (Anwar, 2005). This fulfils the contextualization element as norms are tested against contemporary problems and their relevance to *maqāṣid*. The justification argumentation is clear: the normative-empirical model is deemed inadequate as it does not have a simultaneous mechanism to test norms in a hierarchic, rational, and spiritual manner.

Shortly, it can be concluded that the integration-interconnection can be proven in a differential manner. The integration aspect is proven at the restructuring of paradigms, theories, methods, and technical procedures to achieve a hierarchic-corroborative model. Meanwhile, the interconnection aspect is proven at the expansion of perspective through the complementation of social studies and ethics without eliminating the legal discipline’s identity. However, the dimension that has not fully been proven is the fully ontological integration between revelation and social studies in a single epistemic foundation.

Based on the description above, it is crucial to recommend development research and complete reconstruction efforts to achieve an established methodological design of prophetic legal research. First, follow-up research needs to be directed to the formulation of interdisciplinary ontological integration that is not yet complete up to now. There needs to be a special analysis on how social reality in the juridical-empirical approach may be positioned not only as an arena of critical testing, but as part of an ontological foundation that is dialogistic with revelation and transcendental values. Future research needs to develop a theoretical model that explains the ontological status of social facts in the prophetic legal epistemology: Is it merely verification data, or can it be constructed as part of a *maqāṣid* manifestation in historical reality? This analysis may be carried out through comparative studies between the ontological theory of classical Islamic law, the philosophy of contemporary social studies, and the theory of the integration of knowledge, to formulate a more coherent and equal ontological framework.

Second, there needs to be methodological operationalization research that is more applicable to concrete cases of contemporary law. Even though the structure of hierarchical inventorying, harmonization, rationalization, and collective verification has been conceptually formulated, there is still a need for case study-based research to test the consistency in the application of that model into various fields, such as digital economic law,

environmental law, and family law. Follow-up research must assess how far the spiritual-teleological variable truly influences the argumentation construction and legal decisions, so that it does not stop at the normative-conceptual level, but also be tested both empirically and procedurally.

Third, there needs to be the development of a methodological instrument to measure the degree of “corroboration” in prophetic legal research. The concept of intersubjective verification (*ijtihad jama’i*) and collective legitimacy still has descriptive-theoretical characteristics. Thus, there needs to be follow-up research to formulate the indicators, evaluative parameters, as well as a systematic argumentation testing model. This is crucial so that the methodological reconstruction does not only enrich the epistemological discourse but also yields a scientific standard that can be further replicated, audited, and developed in the academic tradition of legal studies.

CONCLUSION

The reconstruction of prophetic legal epistemology-based legal research is carried out by integrating the *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* approaches in one methodological cycle that is systematic-hierarchic through the stages of norm synchronization and inventorying, the strengthening of rational and contextual argumentation, empirical testing as a falsification arena, as well as the deepening of teleological and spiritual meaning that are intersubjectively verified, so that the legal validity is simultaneously born from logical coherence, empirical resilience, and orientation of basic values.

The theoretical implication is the development of an integrative legal epistemological model that exceeds a normative-empirical dichotomy by placing the law as a validated open system through internal coherence, social correspondence, basic value-based corroborative legitimacy, as well as legal objective (*maqasid*) in one holistic conceptual framework.

The practical implication is the availability of an operational and tiered design of legal research, starting from the formulation of norms as tentative argumentation, testing through empirical data as potential falsifiers, up to the formulation of decisions or recommendations that are contextual, have substantive justice, and enlightening, so that the research product is not only formally valid but also socially effective and orients towards public benefit (*maslahah*).

Acknowledgments

This research is funded by Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta through DRPPS UMS with Professor Competency Research (RKP) grant with contract number 363.23/A.3-III/DRPPS/XII/2025 at 2025 Fiscal Years.

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