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The Contribution of Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd to the Corpus of Nusantara Exegesis and Arabic Language Education

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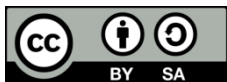
Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantani

ABSTRACT

Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani's *Marāḥ Labīd* is a significant work within the tradition of Quranic exegesis in the Nusantara region. While previous studies have focused on its exegetical methodology and intellectual sources, its potential for Arabic language education remains in need of further research and exploration. This study examines the historical and methodological significance of the exegesis and investigates its potential as an authentic resource for learning Modern Standard Arabic. Employing a qualitative methodology based on desk research, the study applies content analysis to the original text and relevant scholarly literature, examining it through historical, exegetical, linguistic, and pedagogical lenses. The findings highlight how the exegesis bridges classical Sunni interpretive traditions with the intellectual context of the Malay-Indonesian world, integrating transmitted and rational modes of interpretation while presenting perspectives rooted in jurisprudence, theology, Sufism, and linguistics. Furthermore, its syntactic structures, morphological patterns, lexical explanations, and rhetorical features provide rich, valuable material for developing advanced reading comprehension and grammatical analysis skills, as well as for enriching one's linguistic repertoire. This study adds a new dimension to existing research by presenting the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis as a significant exegetical work within the Nusantara region and a promising traditional resource for Arabic language instruction in *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and Islamic higher education institutions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of Quranic exegesis was not confined to the Arab world, despite the Arabian Peninsula being the site of the Revelation, but flourished over time in many other Muslim societies, including the Nusantara archipelago. In each region, the interpretation of the Quran evolved through a process of adaptation that took into account social and cultural circumstances, as well as the needs of the local Muslim community (Daneshgar, 2016). Consequently, the science of exegesis in the Nusantara region played a role that extended beyond merely helping people understand the Quran; it also became a vehicle for transmitting Islamic knowledge and developing a distinctive local intellectual tradition (Amin M. F., 2022). The numerous exegetical works produced by the region's scholars highlight the significant role Nusantara played in enriching the broader heritage of Quranic studies.

The evolution of Quranic exegesis in the Nusantara region constitutes a significant dimension in the broader history of Islamic intellectual traditions. As Islam became established in the Malay-Indonesian world, Quranic exegesis evolved through interaction with local social, cultural, and religious contexts, while simultaneously maintaining a connection to wider Islamic scholarly traditions (Tampubolon, 2025). Scholars from Nusantara produced exegetical works in various languages including Malay, Javanese, Indonesian, and Arabic (Hasibuan, 2024) reflecting diverse strategies for conveying and interpreting Quranic knowledge within local Muslim communities (Daneshgar, 2016; Mutamakin, 2025). This development highlights that Quranic exegesis in Nusantara was not merely a reproduction of interpretations imported from the Middle East, rather it involved processes of intellectual adaptation, transmission, and scholarly engagement with local contexts.

Despite the significant strides made in the study of Quranic exegesis in the Nusantara region, prior research has tended to focus on works written in Malay and Indonesian, while exegeses authored in Arabic produced by the region's own scholars have received comparatively little scholarly attention (Fadzil, 2018). This disparity in research is of great significance, as these Arabic exegeses serve as vital evidence of the active intellectual presence of Nusantara scholars and their engagement with the broader Islamic scholarly tradition particularly through the medium of Arabic, which was historically the primary language of Islamic intellectual production. Beyond their significance in Quranic studies, these works also hold great educational potential for Arabic language instruction particularly within the *pesantren* environment, where authentic Islamic heritage serves as a primary source of educational materials (Cahyo, 2022).

The *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis by Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani stands as one of the most significant works within the Islamic exegetical tradition of the Nusantara region. Authored in the nineteenth century by a scholar whose intellectual renown transcended his homeland, Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani is widely regarded as a preeminent Muslim scholar who contributed to the advancement of Islamic sciences in Nusantara, with an influence that extended to the Middle East. He demonstrated through his numerous scholarly works, most notably *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd* that scholars from Nusantara are capable of effectively contributing to the broader network of Islamic scholarly thought and gaining recognition and acclaim within it (Burhanuddin, 2020).

Marāḥ Labīd commentary is distinguished by unique characteristics that enhance its scholarly value. Written entirely in Arabic, this work offers a comprehensive exegesis of the thirty parts of the Holy Quran, drawing upon insights and knowledge from diverse Islamic disciplines including jurisprudence (fiqh), Sufism (tasawwuf), theology (kalam), and linguistics. Methodologically, Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani combines the synthetic approach focusing on concise interpretation with the analytical approach, which offers a more detailed examination of the Quranic verses. Furthermore, he integrates *tafsīr bi-al-ma'thur* (exegesis based on transmitted sources) with *tafsīr bi-al-ra'y* (exegesis relying on rational reasoning) (Mutamakin, 2025). These characteristics lend the *Marāḥ Labīd* commentary a significant status as a manifestation of the exegetical traditions of the Nusantara region; it simultaneously preserves the continuity of the classical exegetical approach and responds to the intellectual and religious conditions experienced by the Muslim community of that era (Jani, 2024; Zulaikha & Bashori, 2025).

Previous studies on the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis have largely focused on its exegetical methodology, interpretive orientation, intellectual sources, and its standing within the Islamic scholarly tradition of the Nusantara region. Parhani examined Al-Nawawi al-Bantani's exegetical approach, highlighting the integration of analytical and holistic interpretive methods, as well as the synthesis of traditional exegesis and rational exegesis while paying particular attention to its theological, jurisprudential, and Sufi dimensions (Parhani A. , 2019). Similarly, Mujahidin and Asror highlighted the scholarly significance of the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis, particularly noting its concise, systematic presentation and its integration of knowledge drawn from various Islamic disciplines (Mujahiddin, 2021). Another research also examined its methodological characteristics, emphasizing Al-Nawawi's extensive reliance on authoritative classical exegetical sources, while discussing certain methodological limitations, such as the inclusion of *Isra'iliyyat* narratives and the limited use of independent analytical commentary in specific instances (Malihah & Habdin, 2023). Zulaikha likewise focused on the exegetical approach and methodology of *Marāḥ Labīd*, reaffirming the importance of studying this work within the context of Quranic exegesis (Zulaikha & Bashori, 2025). Collectively, these studies have established a solid foundation regarding the methodological and exegetical significance of *Marāḥ Labīd*. However, their primary focus has been on Quranic exegesis and the scholarly characteristics of Al-Nawawi al-Bantani's interpretive work. In contrast, the linguistic and pedagogical dimensions of this commentary have received relatively limited attention, particularly its potential as an authentic text of Classical Arabic for developing learners' proficiency in reading, grammar, morphology, and vocabulary, as well as their comprehension of traditional Islamic texts. Consequently, this study aims to complement previous research by linking the historical and exegetical importance of *Marāḥ Labīd* to its potential contribution to Arabic language education, specifically within the contexts of *Pesantren* and Islamic higher education institutions.

Although previous studies have offered valuable insights into the exegesis of *Marāḥ Labīd*, their primary focus has remained on the exegetical methodology, interpretive orientation, intellectual sources, and scholarly characteristics of Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani's approach; consequently, these studies have made a substantial contribution to understanding *Marāḥ Labīd* as

a work of Quranic exegesis situated within the intellectual heritage of the Nusantara region. However, its linguistic and pedagogical dimensions have received relatively limited attention, particularly its potential as an authentic Classical Arabic text for language instruction. More specifically, previous studies have not sufficiently explored how the linguistic features inherent in the exegetical discourse of *Marāḥ Labīd* can be leveraged to develop learners' reading comprehension, grammatical and morphological awareness, vocabulary acquisition, and ability to engage with traditional Islamic texts. This gap is particularly significant in the context of *pesantren* schools and Islamic higher education institutions, where traditional Islamic texts serve as vital sources for learning the Arabic language and religious sciences. Accordingly, this study addresses this gap by examining the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis, it's not only as a significant work of Quranic interpretation in the Nusantara region but also as a potential source of authentic, Standard Arabic linguistic material for language teaching purposes.

Building on this research gap, the present study examines the contribution of the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis to the corpus of Quranic commentary in the Nusantara region. It investigates the work's historical significance, exegetical methodology, and linguistic characteristics, while placing particular emphasis on its educational potential for Arabic language instruction. The study's contribution lies in broadening the discourse on *Marāḥ Labīd*, it moving beyond its established status as a work of Quranic exegesis to explore its potential as an authentic text in Standard Arabic for language learning. By integrating historical, exegetical, linguistic, and pedagogical perspectives into a unified analytical framework, the study seeks to demonstrate how a classical exegetical work from the Nusantara region can serve simultaneously as a source of Islamic intellectual heritage and a potential resource for Arabic language instruction, particularly within the contexts of *pesantren* schools and Islamic higher education institutions.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research methodology based on a textual and documentary research design. This approach was selected because the study aims to critically examine documentary and textual sources regarding the historical, exegetical, linguistic, and educational significance of the *Marāḥ Labīd* that considered one of the most prominent exegetical works by Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani. The study relies primarily on an analysis of the texts of *Marāḥ Labīd*, drawing upon relevant secondary sources including scholarly books, articles in peer-reviewed journals, and other academic publications to offer an evidence-based interpretation of the work within its historical, intellectual, exegetical, and educational contexts.(El-Karimah, 2025).

The study was designed as qualitative textual research. The unit of analysis consisted of texts and documentary evidence pertaining to the historical context, exegetical methodology, linguistic characteristics, intellectual orientations, and educational implications of *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd*.

Research Sources

The primary source was *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd* by Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani; particular attention was paid to sections providing information on the exegesis's structure, intellectual context, sources, and interpretive methodologies, as well as its treatment of linguistic features and its jurisprudential,

theological, and Sufi orientations.

Secondary sources included scholarly books, articles published in peer-reviewed journals, academic theses and dissertations, and other relevant publications addressing Nawawi al-Bantani, Quranic exegesis in the Nusantara region, Arabic linguistics, Islamic intellectual history, and Arabic language education. These sources were utilized to provide historical context, ground scholarly insights, reinforce interpretations derived from the primary source, and situate the findings within the framework of existing research (Alderman, 2014).

Data Collection

Data was collected through systematic documentary research and a textual examination of the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis by Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani. The original text was studied to identify and select passages relevant to the research objectives. These passages were chosen based on their connection to the work's historical background, its exegetical methodology and interpretive approaches, and its standing within the Quranic exegesis traditions of the Nusantara region, as well as its potential significance for Arabic language education. Particular attention was paid to passages containing explicit linguistic explanations or notable linguistic features including grammatical structures, morphological patterns, lexical meanings and semantics, and rhetorical devices. These passages were documented alongside their immediate exegetical context to preserve their original meaning and facilitate subsequent analysis. As for the secondary sources which included scholarly books and articles in academic journals, they were selected based on their relevance to the research questions and their role in elucidating the historical, interpretive, and educational dimensions of the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis. Finally, the selected primary and secondary materials were gathered and organized in preparation for the subsequent analytical phase.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis method comprising four sequential stages: identification, coding and categorization, interpretation, and synthesis (Puppis, 2019). In the first stage, relevant texts were identified from the primary source the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis and organized according to the research questions. In the second stage, the selected texts underwent coding and categorization based on their historical, exegetical, hermeneutic, linguistic, and pedagogical dimensions; the linguistic category encompassed grammatical structures, morphological forms, lexical meanings and semantic variations, and rhetorical devices. In the third stage, the coded data were interpreted in light of the intellectual and socio-historical context of Quranic exegesis in the Nusantara region, including the scholarly traditions associated with "Islam Nusantara."

To examine the educational and pedagogical implications of the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis, the analysis adopted the concept of "authentic texts" within the field of Arabic language instruction as a methodological framework. This perspective is grounded in the premise that texts originally produced for purposes other than language teaching can provide meaningful linguistic input in educational settings (Simonsen, 2019). Accordingly, the selected texts were evaluated for their potential to foster advanced reading comprehension, grammatical analysis, morphological

awareness, vocabulary enrichment, and an understanding of traditional Islamic texts. The analysis also addressed the relationship between linguistic features and their exegetical context, focusing on how grammatical, lexical, and exegetical elements appear within meaningful, eloquent Arabic discourse, rather than presenting them as isolated linguistic examples.

In the final stage, the results derived from the historical, interpretive, linguistic, and pedagogical analyses were compared and aligned with relevant secondary studies to identify recurring patterns, elements of continuity, distinctive features, and pedagogical implications. The analysis process adhered to established principles of qualitative content analysis specifically systematic coding, categorization, and the interpretation of textual data (Schreier, 2012; Krippendorff, 2018). As the study relies on textual analysis rather than classroom-based experimentation, its pedagogical conclusions center on the potential educational value of interpreting *Marāḥ Labīd* rather than on empirically proven improvements in learners' Arabic language proficiency.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

The analysis of the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis identified four main categories of findings: historical and intellectual context, exegetical methodology, specialized perspectives, and linguistic features relevant to Arabic language instruction.

First: Historical and intellectual context. The documentary analysis situates the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis within the tradition of Quranic exegesis in the Nusantara region, as the material under study addresses the relationship between classical Islamic scholarly heritage and the intellectual and socio-religious context of Muslim communities in the region.

Secondly: Exegetical methodology. The analysis highlights the use of both holistic and analytical approaches, alongside exegesis based on transmitted tradition (*al-ma'thur*) and exegesis based on rational interpretation (*al-ra'y*). These categories represent respectively concise versus analytical modes of interpretation, as well as approaches grounded in transmitted sources versus those based on rational analysis. The exegesis also incorporates discussions pertaining to Islamic jurisprudence, theology, Sufism, and Arabic linguistics.

Third: Specialized Perspectives. The texts under study contain exegetical discussions that engage with various Islamic disciplines, incorporating jurisprudential, theological, Sufi, and linguistic dimensions within the context of interpreting Quranic verses.

Fourth: Linguistic Features. The analysis identifies the linguistic dimension of the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis as an area relevant to Arabic language instruction. The specific features examined include grammatical structures, morphological patterns, lexical meanings and semantic nuances, and rhetorical devices. These features serve as a basis for exploring the potential application of this exegesis in areas such as reading comprehension, grammatical analysis, vocabulary development, and the understanding of classical Islamic texts.

3.2 Discussion

Biography of Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani

Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani is a prominent Indonesian Muslim scholar whose writings span various Islamic disciplines. His exegesis, *Marāḥ Labīd* has garnered particular scholarly attention due to its exegetical methodology and intellectual dimensions (Nirwana, 2022). He was raised in a devout family in the Banten region, and his early intellectual development was shaped by his father's guidance which began when he was approximately five years old before he continued his studies alongside his brothers under a group of distinguished scholars, including Kyai Sahl and Kyai Raden Yusuf (Suwarjin, 2017; Fradana, 2024). Furthermore, historical sources and oral traditions link his lineage to Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin and Sheikh Syarif Hidayatullah (Cahyo, 2022), although this genealogical connection remains a subject of scholarly debate (Cahyo, 2022; Suwarjin, 2017; Fradana, 2024).

After completing his initial studies, Nawawi al-Bantani returned to Tanara and taught at his family's traditional Islamic boarding school pesantren where discussions on creed and Islamic jurisprudence were part of the educational environment (Suwarjin, 2017). His subsequent studies in Mecca enabled him to explore a broader range of Islamic disciplines, including Arabic language and literature, Hadith studies, Quranic exegesis, theology, and Islamic jurisprudence. Although he resumed teaching in Banten upon his return in 1833, the political and social conditions under Dutch colonial rule prompted his decision to return to Mecca to continue his scholarly pursuits (Mujahiddin, 2021). This educational journey provides a crucial context for understanding the intellectual foundations of the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis, his deep immersion in the Arabic language and literature, alongside his study of traditional Islamic sciences, likely enhanced his ability to interpret Quranic expressions from linguistic, grammatical, and specialized perspectives. Furthermore, his exposure to diverse scholarly traditions offers a context for examining the blend of linguistic analysis, transmitted interpretations and insights derived from jurisprudence and theology found in his work. Nevertheless, the link between his educational background and his exegetical methodology must be established primarily through textual evidence within *Marāḥ Labīd* itself, rather than merely inferred from biographical details.

Al-Nawawi later decided to remain in Mecca, where he studied under scholars from the Hejaz, Egypt, the Indonesian archipelago, and other parts of the Islamic world. He received a significant portion of his formal education at the Sacred Mosque and continued his studies in Medina. His academic pursuits encompassed a wide range of Islamic disciplines, including the fundamentals of faith, jurisprudence, rhetoric, and logic. Among the scholars from whom he acquired knowledge was Sheikh Sayyid Ahmad al-Nakhrawi (Marzuki, 2025). Over time, Al-Nawawi al-Bantani earned a distinguished status among scholars and students of knowledge in Makkah, becoming known by the title "Sheikh Al-Nawawi al-Jawi" a title bestowed upon prominent scholars hailing from the Malay-Indonesian world (Mujahiddin, 2021). His scholarly stature provides a crucial context for understanding the reception of the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis in both the Middle East and the Nusantara region; his engagement with scholarly networks in Mecca situated his work within a broader framework of Islamic intellectual exchange, while his origins and ties to the Malay-Indonesian world

linked his scholarly output to the religious and educational traditions of Nusantara. Against this trans-regional backdrop, *Marāḥ Labīd* can be viewed as a work through which a scholar from Nusantara participated in the wider discourse of Islamic exegesis, while simultaneously contributing to the region's own traditions of Quranic interpretation. The significance of this work is not limited to the scholarly stature of its author, it extends to the relationship between trans-regional scholarly networks and the development of Islamic sciences in Nusantara. However, specific claims regarding the circulation and reception of this work as well as the extent of its influence on particular institutions or scholarly circles require further evidence and documentation.

Over the course of some thirty-nine years of study, Al-Nawawi emerged as a highly esteemed Muslim scholar in the nineteenth century; his works garnered acclaim among scholars in the Middle East, particularly within the Shafi'i school of thought. He was also awarded the honorary title "Master of the Scholars of the Hijaz" a title reflecting the high status he held within the scholarly circles of the two Holy Cities (Fradana, 2024).

Although Al-Nawawi al-Bantani spent his final years in Mecca, he maintained ties to the Nusantara region through his students, who kept him informed of developments in their homeland. Through his scholarly writings, teaching activities, and educational networks, he continued to influence Islamic thought and religious education in the region, while fostering intellectual resilience and critical awareness regarding colonial rule (Cahyo E. D., 2022). These trans-regional connections provide a crucial context for studying the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis, particularly in illustrating how Al-Nawawi's engagement with Meccan scholarly traditions contributed to the creation of a work that became an integral part of the intellectual heritage of the Nusantara region.

Historical Background of the Composition of Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd

Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd also known as *Al-Tafsīr al-Munir*, it is considered one of the most prominent works of Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani; written entirely in Arabic, it was completed in 1305 AH (1887 CE) during the latter part of his scholarly career. Both titles have been used in the scholarly literature, although the reason for the two names is not clearly established. One explanation may be connected to an edition issued by the al-Halabi Press, which placed *al-Tafsīr al-Wajiz* in the margins and may have contributed to the use of *al-Tafsīr al-Munir* as an alternative title (Umar Muhammad Noor, 2023).

The writing of *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd* followed repeated requests from Nawawi's colleagues and fellow scholars in Mecca. He was initially reluctant to take on the task, largely because of his scholarly humility and his concern about the Prophetic warning against interpreting the Qur'an based solely on personal opinion (Mubarak & Fauzi, 2021). He eventually decided to write the commentary with several purposes in mind: preserving Islamic knowledge for later generations, supporting the development of Islamic scholarship, and offering Muslims a dependable explanation of the Qur'an based on the established principles of classical tafsīr. Nawawi did not claim to be an independent authority in Qur'anic interpretation. Rather, he understood his work as part of an exegetical tradition developed by earlier Muslim scholars. In the introduction to the commentary, he acknowledges his use of several authoritative classical tafsīr works, some of which were difficult

to obtain during his time. These works therefore served as important references in developing his interpretations (Parhani A. , 2019).

The title *Marāḥ Labīd* has both lexical and symbolic dimensions. The term *marah*, derived from *raha-yaruhu-rawahan*, may refer to a place of rest or a stopping place for travelers (Al-Dawliyyah, 2024), whereas *labid*, derived from *labida-yalbadu*, is associated with meanings such as gathering, remaining, or becoming firmly settled (Al-Iṣfahānī, 2009) (Al-Zabīdī M. i., 1965). Taken together, the two terms may suggest the idea of a stable place for intellectual and spiritual repose (Marzuki, 2025). These activities are relevant to advanced reading instruction, particularly in helping students comprehend texts in Modern Standard Arabic. However, the educational value of the *Marāḥ Labīd* exegesis extends beyond the linguistic implications of its title; its explanations of Quranic phrases can serve as material for analyzing grammatical structures, morphological patterns, and semantic relationships. Consequently, this exegesis could be considered a potential authentic text for Arabic language learning, although its pedagogical effectiveness warrants further research and investigation through actual teaching practice.

A distinctive feature of *Marāḥ Labīd* is its style, which combines conciseness with richness of content; Al-Nawawi typically sets out the core meaning of a Quranic verse in a direct and methodical manner, while providing further detail whenever the subject matter requires it. For instance, he presents relevant jurisprudential views regarding matters of Sharia without becoming embroiled in protracted debates among the various schools of jurisprudence. At the same time, the commentary draws upon diverse branches of Islamic scholarship including theology, jurisprudence, Sufism, and the Arabic language sciences, among other related disciplines. This blend of concise exposition and multidisciplinary discussion reflects the breadth of Al-Nawawi's scholarly interests and helps clarify the standing of *Marāḥ Labīd* within the traditional heritage of Quranic exegesis.

However, this commentary suffers from several shortcomings; some narrations lack explicit documentation regarding their chains of transmission, authenticity, or precise sources including those attributed to the Prophet, the Companions, and the Successors. The work also incorporates a number of *Isra'iliyyat* whose historical authenticity remains a subject of scholarly debate (Farid, 2021). These issues need to be viewed in relation to the broader characteristics of classical tafsīr literature.

Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd covers all thirty parts of the Holy Quran and follows the standard order of the Quranic text, beginning with Surah Al-Fatiha and concluding with Surah An-Nas. Unlike many works by scholars from the Nusantara region which were written in Javanese, Malay, or Indonesian this exegesis is composed entirely in Arabic (Bahary, 2015). The presentation follows a consistent sequence, discussing Quranic verses according to their order in the *Mushaf*. Al-Nawawi typically begins the discussion of each Surah by stating its name, specifying whether it is Meccan or Medinan, and noting the number of its verses, words, and letters. When scholars differ regarding the classification of a particular Surah, he presents the various views on the matter rather than limiting himself to a single perspective reflecting his regard for the diversity of opinions and scholarly interpretations found within the authentic exegetical tradition (Kholilurrohman, 2018).

Exegetical Methodology in Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd

The exegetical methodology adopted by Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani in his work *Marāḥ Labīd* draws upon a wide spectrum of interpretive approaches and Islamic disciplines; rather than limiting himself to a single method, Nawawi combines diverse techniques in interpreting the Qur'an, reflecting the breadth of his scholarly background and his openness to multiple exegetical traditions (Jakfar, 2022).

According to Aan Parhani, the comment primarily follows the *ijmali* approach; through this method, Al-Nawawi explains Quranic verses with relative brevity, focusing on their essential meanings and core messages (Parhani A. , 2019). The concise presentation style does not preclude a discussion of various exegetical issues or the inclusion of diverse linguistic perspectives in an organized and fluid manner; indeed, the exegesis incorporates elements of an analytical approach. In several instances, Al-Nawawi addresses linguistic meanings, sentence structures, the interrelationships between verses (*munasabah*), the occasions of revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*), and traditions narrated by the Companions and the Successors. Thus, the work combines a predominantly succinct explanatory style with more detailed analysis whenever the subject matter requires further clarification. (Jani, 2024).

A distinctive feature of the *Marāḥ Labīd* commentary is its combination of traditional exegesis and rational interpretation the author draws upon Prophetic *hadiths*, narrations from the early generations (Salaf), and authoritative exegetical works, while simultaneously employing linguistic reasoning and rational analysis to elucidate Quranic verses. Furthermore, he occasionally takes into account the social norms and cultural practices prevalent during the Prophetic era alongside the rules of Arabic grammar and language to clarify specific meanings (Bahary, 2015). Rifa'i Hasan also notes a similarity between *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd* and *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* in their concise style. At the same time, Nawawi's commentary is distinguished by its frequent use of *Tafsīr al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an*, in which one Qur'anic passage is explained with reference to another. For example, he relates the expression *Maliki Yawm al-Diin in Surat al-Fatihah* to Q. 82:19, using another Qur'anic passage to clarify its meaning.

In matters of theology (*'aqidah*), *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd* reflects Nawawi's affiliation with Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah, particularly the Ash'ari theological tradition (Mujahiddin, 2021). This orientation can be seen in his interpretation of *istiwa'* in Q. 20:5. Rather than taking *istiwa'* to mean physical sitting or establishment upon the Throne, Nawawi interprets the term through *ta'wil*, relating it to divine sovereignty, dominion, and authority. Such an interpretation is consistent with the Ash'ari approach to scriptural expressions that could otherwise be understood as implying corporeal attributes.

In matters of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Nawawi generally follows the Shafi'i school, although he sometimes mentions other juristic opinions without explicitly indicating a preferred view (*tarjih*). His interpretation of *lamastum al-nisaa'* in Q. 4:43 provides an example of this position. He understands the expression as referring to direct physical contact between a man and a woman, which has implications for ritual purity. This interpretation corresponds to the Shafi'i legal position.

The commentary also incorporates Sufi perspectives. Muhammad ‘Ali Iyazi identifies a strong Sufi orientation in Nawawi’s engagement with the thought of Muḥyi al-Din Ibn ‘Arabi. However, this does not render *Marāḥ Labīd* commentary a purely esoteric one, as Sufi interpretations appear therein alongside linguistic, theological, and jurisprudential discussions (Bahary, 2015). Its multidisciplinary approach is also evident in its reliance on at least five key fields of Islamic studies: Quranic sciences; Arabic language sciences (particularly grammar, morphology, and rhetoric); jurisprudence and its principles (*fiqh* and *uṣul al-fiqh*); *aqidah*; and *tasawwuf* (Jakfar, 2022). Collectively, these elements demonstrate how Al-Nawawi integrates textual, linguistic, jurisprudential, theological, and spiritual perspectives into a single exegetical work, thereby lending *Marāḥ Labīd* commentary a broad methodological scope within the classical exegetical tradition and the history of Islamic thought in the Nusantara region.

The Contribution of Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd to the Nusantara Exegetical Tradition

The diversity of Quranic exegesis has given rise to an interpretive tradition shaped by varied intellectual, doctrinal, and methodological perspectives. Within this broader tradition, *Marāḥ Labīd* commentary by Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani stands as a significant contribution to Quranic studies in the Nusantara region. Authored in the nineteenth century, this work reflects the engagement of a Nusantara scholar with the broader evolution of Islamic exegetical studies; it also exemplifies how scholars from the Indonesian archipelago have contributed to the wider intellectual tradition of Quranic exegesis (Malihah & Habdin, 2023).

After completing the *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd*, Al-Nawawi continued to teach the work to his students in Mecca for nearly a decade, right up until his death. Through this teaching, his exegetical ideas were passed on to students and continued to circulate within the scholarly networks he had established. Although authored by a scholar from Java, the commentary spread beyond the Indonesian archipelago, attracting the interest of scholars in the Middle East particularly in Mecca and Egypt. In Indonesia, it became a key reference for advanced Quranic studies in *pesantren* often taught after *Tafsīr al-Jalalayn*; its use in these settings reflects a blend of concise exposition and more expansive, multidisciplinary analytical discussion (Bahary, 2015).

Nawawi’s influence was also transmitted through the network of students he taught. Many of his students later became scholars who contributed to the development of Islamic scholarship in different parts of the Indonesian Archipelago. His scholarly circle in Mecca also included students from other regions, among them Sheikh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi. These networks helped connect the transmission of Islamic knowledge between the Middle East and Nusantara and contributed to the development of Islamic intellectual life in the region (Malihah & Habdin, 2023).

From a methodological perspective, *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd* remains closely connected to the classical Sunni exegetical tradition. This can be seen in Nawawi’s extensive use of the Qur’an, Prophetic traditions, reports from the Companions, and established classical commentaries. In this respect, his approach differs from that of Muhammad Abduh, whose reformist interpretation placed greater emphasis on rational inquiry in addressing modern intellectual and social issues. Nawawi’s method, however, was not confined to transmitted reports. His use of *Mafatīḥ al-Ghayb* by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, for example, indicates his engagement with rational and analytical elements already

present within the classical exegetical tradition. *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd* can therefore be viewed as a reorganization of established exegetical knowledge, bringing together transmitted materials and analytical perspectives in a systematic form for later Muslim readers (Bahary, 2015).

Professor H. Abdul Rahman Masoud highlights Al-Nawawi's stature as a non-Arab scholar who offered a sophisticated Quranic exegesis in Arabic, describing him as the "Ghazali of the nineteenth century" a reference to his influence on Islamic thought and education. While Muhammad Abduh focused more heavily on "reason," Al-Nawawi remained more closely aligned with the classical Sunni scholarly tradition, even as he continued to address the needs of later Muslim societies (Amin, 2019).

The enduring use of it is clearly evident, particularly within the traditions of pesantren. Its concise language, systematic structure, and reliance on authoritative traditional sources have made it an accessible reference for scholars and students alike. Consequently, it has remained a key resource for generations of *santri* and has contributed to sustaining the transmission of authentic Islamic scholarly heritage across Southeast Asia (Syaffira Nur Rajiba, 2025). Similarly, Sheikh Sahl Mahfouz regarded this work as a significant contribution to the field of exegesis in the Nusantara region, particularly because it presents Quranic meanings in an accessible manner and links exegesis to practical religious issues, including jurisprudence. In this context, it commentary can be viewed not merely as a work of Quranic exegesis within Nusantara, but also as a vehicle for transmitting authentic Islamic knowledge through religious education and jurisprudential studies (Islami et al., 2025).

The Implications of Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd for Arabic Language Education

The contribution of *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd* extends beyond the realm of Quranic interpretation; it also holds significant potential for Arabic language education in the Nusantara region. As a Quranic commentary authored entirely in Arabic by a scholar from the Indonesian archipelago, this work highlights the capacity of the region's scholars to actively participate in the broader Arabic-based Islamic scholarly tradition. Furthermore, its Arabic text serves as an authentic linguistic resource that can be utilized to support Arabic language learning particularly within pesantren, where traditional Islamic texts constitute a vital component of the curriculum.

Beyond its exegetical significance, the *Marāḥ Labīd* commentary holds potential value for Arabic language education, thanks to the linguistic explanations, syntactic structures, morphological patterns, and contextual interpretations it contains. These elements can serve as authentic instructional materials for developing advanced reading comprehension skills and fostering an understanding of Classical Arabic texts particularly within *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and institutions of higher Islamic education.

From a pedagogical perspective, *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd* is considered an authentic text suitable for teaching the Arabic language; the use of such authentic texts enables learners to engage directly with the classical works of Muslim scholars, while also contributing to the development of reading and comprehension skills and the enrichment of Arabic vocabulary. Within the tradition of pesantren, this exegesis has served as a reference in the fields of Quranic exegesis and the study of traditional Islamic texts as its concise, systematic, and fluid style makes it a valuable educational

resource for integrating Arabic language proficiency with Islamic knowledge. Contemporary studies also indicate the continued use of *Marāḥ Labīd* in Islamic education and Quranic studies within pesantren in Indonesia (El-Karimah M. F., 2025). Accordingly, this commentary can be viewed not only as an authoritative reference work on exegesis but also as a potential educational resource for developing the academic and linguistic competencies of Arabic language learners.

From a linguistic perspective, *Marāḥ Labīd* serves as a valuable resource for advanced Arabic language instruction, particularly in the areas of grammar, morphology, and the vocabulary of Classical Arabic. Written entirely in Arabic, the work enables learners to engage with authentic grammatical structures, rhetorical expressions, and lexical patterns that support the study of the language (Richards, 2001). When interpreting Quranic verses, Al-Nawawi integrates linguistic analysis with his exegetical commentary, highlighting grammatical structures, syntactic relationships, morphological forms, lexical meanings, and the semantic connections between words, phrases, and sentences; these aspects help clarify how the grammatical and semantic principles of the Arabic language contribute to the interpretation of the Quranic text (Al-Suyūṭī, 2003; Al-Zarkashī, 1957; Ryding, 2005). The results of this study also indicate that *Marāḥ Labīd* is deeply grounded in Arabic linguistic analysis and draws upon diverse exegetical methodologies and authoritative classical sources. Consequently, its linguistic content serves as a valuable resource for authentic materials used in teaching Arabic, particularly for learners studying traditional Islamic texts. In this context, the exegesis can contribute to enhancing Arabic language proficiency by linking language learning with Quranic exegesis and traditional Islamic disciplines.

From a cultural perspective, *Marāḥ Labīd* highlights the interaction between the broader Islamic scholarly heritage and the intellectual context of the Nusantara region. It demonstrates that Nusantara scholars were not merely passive recipients of knowledge from the Middle East but were active participants in the production and transmission of Islamic knowledge through works written in Arabic. In this regard it reflects the scholarly role of the pesantren tradition in preserving the study of classical Islamic texts in Indonesia (Cato, 2025). Furthermore, the integration of elements of Sufism, jurisprudence, and social issues in this work demonstrates how Al-Nawawi fostered a dialogue between diverse dimensions of Islamic knowledge and the context of Muslim societies in the Nusantara region. From an educational perspective, incorporating this commentary into Arabic language curricula would link language acquisition with the region's Islamic intellectual and cultural heritage; such an approach could help learners develop their linguistic proficiency while also fostering an awareness of the historical role played by Nusantara scholars within the broader Islamic scholarly tradition.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani's *Marāḥ Labīd* stands as a significant contribution to the exegetical tradition of the Nusantara region. Although authored in the nineteenth century, this exegesis maintains a strong connection to classical Sunni interpretive traditions while integrating linguistic, theological, jurisprudential, and Sufi insights. Its historical and intellectual significance can be understood through both its content and its circulation across the

scholarly networks linking the Middle East with the Nusantara region.

Methodologically, this exegesis combines holistic and analytical approaches, drawing upon both transmitted tradition and interpretation based on reasoned opinion. Al-Nawawi grounds his exegesis in the Holy Quran, Prophetic Hadith, the traditions of the Companions, and authoritative classical commentaries, while integrating linguistic and rational analysis. Furthermore, the work addresses issues of jurisprudence, theology, and Sufism, highlighting its multidisciplinary nature.

The contribution of *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd* to the Nusantara exegetical tradition is also reflected in its continued use within traditional Islamic education, particularly in *pesantren*. Its concise and systematic presentation has supported the transmission and study of classical Islamic knowledge across generations. The commentary therefore represents not only a work of Qur'anic exegesis but also part of the broader tradition of turats-based Islamic education in the Nusantara.

Regarding Arabic language education, the findings indicate that *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd* holds educational potential as an authentic Arabic text; its use of Classical Arabic texts encompassing grammatical structures, morphological patterns, vocabulary, and exegetical terminology provides material that can support advanced reading and comprehension skills in the language. Furthermore, its use in *pesantren* offers an opportunity to integrate Arabic language learning with the study of Quranic exegesis and traditional Islamic sciences. However, the extent to which this exegesis contributes to enhancing learners' Arabic language proficiency requires further empirical research.

The contribution of this study lies in integrating the historical, methodological, and pedagogical dimensions of *Tafsīr Marāḥ Labīd* within a unified analytical framework. Rather than viewing this work merely as a product of traditional Quranic studies, the study highlights its connections to intellectual networks in the Nusantara region, its methodological diversity, and its potential utility for Arabic language instruction. These findings indicate that *Marāḥ Labīd* remains a valuable subject of inquiry within the context of Quranic studies in Nusantara and holds promising potential as an Islamic heritage-based resource for teaching Arabic in contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

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Mohamad Samsudin		✓		✓								✓		✓
Hamzah Robbani				✓		✓	✓						✓	✓
Misbahuddin				✓			✓	✓		✓		✓		✓
C : Conceptualization	I : Investigation							Vi : Visualization						
M : Methodology	R : Resources							Su : Supervision						
So : Software	D : Data Curation							P : Project administration						
Va : Validation	O : Writing - Original Draft							Fu : Funding acquisition						
Fo : Formal analysis	E : Writing - Review & Editing													

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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