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Applying *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* Hermeneutics to Prophet Isa's Ascension for Enhancing Interreligious Dialogue and SDG 16

Hisyam bin Hamid Albandi*

Department of Islamic Family Law, Institut Miftahul Huda Al Azhar, Banjar, Indonesia;
Doctoral Program in Islamic Law, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara (UINSU) Medan, Indonesia

Ma'adul Yaqien Makkarateng

Ankara Üniversitesi, Ankara, Turkey

Abdul Syatar

Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia

Indrius Kuklys

Klaipeda State University of Applied Sciences, Klaipeda, Lithuania, Northern Europe

Faradila Hasan

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Manado, Indonesia

Izzah Munisah Farhati

Department of Islamic Religious Education, Institut Miftahul Huda Al Azhar, Banjar, Indonesia

Muhammad Safiq Wildan

Department of Islamic Religious Education, Institut Miftahul Huda Al Azhar, Banjar, Indonesia

Tofiq Kurohman

Department of Islamic Family Law, Institut Miftahul Huda Al Azhar, Banjar, Indonesia

Rahila Sayidah Afifah Khansa

Department of Islamic Economics, Institut Miftahul Huda Al Azhar, Banjar, Indonesia

Tusiem binti Abdussyakur Kasmuri

Averroes Media Ciamis, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: hisamahyani@gmail.com

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Abstract

Background: The ascension of Prophet Isa (Jesus) in Islamic theology highlights his prophetic authority and divine protection. This study examines how this theological event can foster interreligious dialogue, contributing to SDG 16 by promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Method: A qualitative literature-based approach was employed, analyzing primary texts (Qur'an, Bible) and scholarly works on interfaith perspectives. The *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* hermeneutic method was used to interpret historical meaning, intended purpose, and contemporary relevance of the ascension narrative.



Results: Findings indicate that Islam views Isa's ascension as divine affirmation of prophethood, Christianity emphasizes miraculous aspects, Judaism does not recognize it doctrinally, while Hindu and Buddhist perspectives interpret Isa symbolically. The *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* approach translates these theological insights into contemporary values supporting interreligious understanding.

Discussion: The study demonstrates that Islamic theological interpretation of Isa's ascension can guide interreligious education and community initiatives, promoting justice, peace, and social harmony.

Conclusion: Applying the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* hermeneutics connects classical textual meanings with modern interfaith dialogue, enhancing contributions to SDG 16.

Novelty: This research uniquely bridges classical Islamic texts and contemporary interreligious dialogue using the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* method.

Keywords: Prophet Isa, Ascension, Interreligious Dialogue, *Ma'na-cum-Maghza*, SDG 16

INTRODUCTION

Interreligious understanding has emerged as a critical pillar for sustaining social cohesion in pluralistic societies, particularly in countries such as Indonesia, where diverse religious communities coexist (Aji, Che-Ha, & Md Zabri, 2025; Anam, Fanani, & Syahputra, 2023). In such contexts, religious narratives play a pivotal role in shaping ethical awareness, moral reasoning, and collaborative social engagement, which in turn contribute to broader global objectives such as peace, justice, and strong institutions as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) (Thomsen, 2022; D'Amore et al., 2026). Among Islamic theological narratives, the ascension of Prophet Isa (Jesus) offers a unique perspective by emphasizing prophetic authority, divine protection, and moral exemplarity. This event provides a framework through which theological interpretation can intersect with contemporary social realities, offering ethical lessons that are potentially translatable across religious boundaries (Firdausiyah, 2021; Mahmud, 2025; Polak, 2020).

Although there is a growing body of literature on interreligious dialogue, tolerance, and social cohesion, existing studies often address these phenomena in generalized or descriptive terms, without connecting them systematically to specific theological events or hermeneutic methodologies (Aji, Che-Ha, & Md Zabri, 2025; Ardi & Budiarti, 2020; Mansouri & Vergani, 2018). Notably, the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* approach, which bridges classical Islamic interpretations with contemporary social applications, has rarely been applied to the case of Prophet Isa's ascension. This represents a conceptual gap in understanding how theological exegesis can inform practical strategies for promoting interfaith tolerance, prosocial behavior, and civic engagement aligned with SDG 16. Addressing this gap requires integrating classical hermeneutics, comparative theology, and ethical frameworks to produce actionable insights for multicultural societies.

The *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* approach, developed by Prof. Dr. Phil. Sahiron Syamsuddin, emphasizes three stages of interpretation: the historical meaning (*ma'na al-tarikhi*), historical purpose (*al-maghza al-tarikhi*), and contemporary significance (*al-maghza al-mu'ashirah*) of Quranic texts (Syamsuddin, 2017; Firdausiyah, 2021). This framework allows scholars to



extract universal moral and ethical principles while situating them in contemporary social contexts (Heryana et al., 2025; Umaroh, 2021). By applying *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* to the ascension of Prophet Isa, researchers can translate theological insights into strategies for enhancing interreligious understanding, civic responsibility, and ethical education. The approach also facilitates a critical connection between classical Islamic teachings and the broader objectives of peace, justice, and social cohesion, reinforcing its relevance for SDG 16-oriented initiatives.

Contemporary societies face persistent challenges to social cohesion, including stereotyping, misinformation, intergroup prejudice, and socio-cultural polarization (Dwivedi et al., 2022; Ardi & Budiarti, 2020). Religious narratives, when interpreted rigorously through hermeneutic frameworks, can serve as mechanisms for cultivating empathy, moral reasoning, and prosocial behavior, thereby mitigating these challenges (Aji, Che-Ha, & Md Zabri, 2025; Kanas, Scheepers, & Sterkens, 2017). Prophet Isa's ascension embodies ethical lessons that transcend doctrinal distinctions, emphasizing divine justice, moral integrity, and communal responsibility (Mahmud, 2025; Ashafa & Raimi, 2024). Comparative analyses across Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism reveal shared ethical principles, which can form the basis of interfaith dialogue, mutual understanding, and collaborative civic initiatives (Polak, 2020; Griera, 2020).

Education plays a central role in operationalizing these theological insights. Faith-based and interreligious educational programs have demonstrated potential in cultivating empathy, ethical awareness, and civic responsibility, preparing students and communities to navigate pluralistic social environments constructively (D'Agostino & Asadullah, 2025; Wulandari, 2022). Incorporating narratives such as Prophet Isa's ascension into curricula enables the internalization of *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin* values—mercy, justice, and social solidarity—which are essential for nurturing peaceful coexistence and community resilience (Ahyani, Slamet, & Tobroni, 2021). By embedding ethical and interreligious teachings in structured learning environments, educators can strengthen both individual moral development and societal cohesion, advancing SDG 16 objectives.

This study addresses the research gap by investigating how Prophet Isa's ascension, interpreted through the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* approach, can inform interreligious understanding, ethical behavior, and actionable strategies for promoting SDG 16. While prior research has explored general themes of tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and social cohesion (Nasrulloh et al., 2025; R'boul & Yazidi, 2026), these studies have not systematically linked theological hermeneutics to practical social and educational applications. This research therefore seeks to bridge classical Islamic exegesis, comparative religious perspectives, and contemporary social challenges, providing a structured framework that enhances both theoretical knowledge and practical strategies for interreligious engagement. In doing so, it offers a rigorous and internationally relevant contribution to scholarship on theology, ethics, and social cohesion.

In summary, the ascension of Prophet Isa represents a significant intersection of theology, ethics, and social relevance. Through the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* framework and comparative religious analysis, this study illustrates how classical Islamic narratives can guide modern



interfaith dialogue, moral education, and civic engagement. By articulating clear pathways from theological interpretation to practical social application, the research contributes to building peaceful, just, and resilient societies, thereby advancing the overarching objectives of SDG 16 (Thomsen, 2022; Ashafa & Raimi, 2024).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interreligious understanding and social cohesion have become prominent topics in recent scholarship, particularly in pluralistic societies where religious diversity is significant (Aji, Che-Ha, & Md Zabri, 2025; Anam, Fanani, & Syahputra, 2023). Studies suggest that prosocial behavior, tolerance, and ethical engagement are deeply influenced by religious beliefs and narratives, which serve as moral frameworks guiding individual and collective conduct (Ardi & Budiarti, 2020; Ashafa & Raimi, 2024). The concept of *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin*, emphasizing mercy, justice, and social solidarity, has been proposed as a core principle for integrating religious ethics into broader socio-economic development (Ahyani, Slamet, & Tobroni, 2021). This principle underscores the potential of religious teachings to shape behaviors conducive to peaceful coexistence and civic engagement.

Prosocial behavior in intergroup contexts has been identified as a crucial mediator for reducing prejudice and enhancing interreligious cooperation (Aji, Che-Ha, & Md Zabri, 2025). Systematic reviews highlight that positive intergroup contact and knowledge of other religious traditions significantly reduce biases and foster mutual respect (Kanas, Scheepers, & Sterkens, 2017; Mansouri & Vergani, 2018). Conversely, negative intergroup contact, stereotyping, and collective narcissism can exacerbate tensions (Ardi & Budiarti, 2020). These findings demonstrate that interreligious understanding is not only a theological or philosophical concern but also a social-psychological process, where both structural and attitudinal factors determine the success of cohesion initiatives.

The *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* hermeneutic approach offers a methodological framework for connecting classical religious texts to contemporary social and ethical challenges (Syamsuddin, 2017; Firdausiyah, 2021). By interpreting historical meaning, historical purpose, and contemporary significance, this method enables scholars to extract universal ethical lessons from religious narratives (Heryana et al., 2025; Umaroh, 2021). Several studies demonstrate that applying *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* facilitates practical moral education and ethical reasoning, particularly in diverse societies where shared values are essential for social harmony (Mahmud, 2025; Ghifari et al., 2025). This framework is thus highly relevant for translating theological insights into actionable strategies that support SDG 16 objectives.

Religious education and faith-based programs have been recognized as effective mechanisms for promoting ethical awareness, empathy, and interreligious understanding (D'Agostino & Asadullah, 2025; Wulandari, 2022). By integrating narratives such as Prophet Isa's ascension or other morally instructive texts, educational initiatives can cultivate prosocial behavior and civic responsibility in students (Ahyani, Slamet, & Tobroni, 2021). Moreover, religious moderation embedded in curricula has been shown to strengthen social resilience, particularly in contexts prone to conflict or radicalization (Nasrulloh et al., 2025; Ghifari et al., 2025).



These findings indicate that education serves as a critical conduit for operationalizing the ethical and interreligious potential of religious narratives.

Interreligious contact has been extensively studied as a factor influencing social attitudes and cohesion. Research in Indonesia and other multicultural societies suggests that both direct and mediated interfaith interactions can improve knowledge of other religions, reduce prejudice, and enhance willingness to collaborate (Kanas, Scheepers, & Sterkens, 2017; Polak, 2020; Griera, 2020). Similarly, studies on interreligious marriage highlight its role in fostering social integration and bridging community divides (Tilahun, Gatisso, & Ali, 2025; 2026). These insights reinforce the notion that social cohesion is a multidimensional phenomenon, requiring attention to personal attitudes, community structures, and broader cultural norms.

Digital media and social platforms have emerged as influential arenas for shaping religious understanding and tolerance (Fakhrudin, Wibisono, & Nase, 2026). Analyses of religious sermons disseminated through platforms like YouTube and TikTok reveal that online content can impact attitudes toward religious diversity, promoting tolerance when framed ethically and moderately (Fakhrudin et al., 2026). This aligns with findings that information management, communication strategies, and digital literacy are critical in contemporary society for countering misinformation and fostering inclusive behaviors (Dwivedi et al., 2022). Thus, technology can amplify both the positive and negative effects of religious messaging, highlighting the need for deliberate and ethically guided dissemination.

Comparative studies of religious ethics and sustainability indicate that moral frameworks across faiths share overlapping principles that can support collective well-being and environmental stewardship (D'Amore et al., 2026; Sarwar, Almasradi, & Abbas, 2025). Ethical leadership, justice, and social responsibility, often derived from religious teachings, emerge as key enablers for sustainable community development. These studies suggest that ethical and prosocial behavior, grounded in religious narratives, is not limited to intra-religious contexts but can be extended toward interfaith collaboration and global challenges, such as environmental management and public policy (D'Amore et al., 2026; Rakotoarisoa, Kurniasih, & Ramalina Ranaivo, 2026).

Religious tolerance remains a core theme in promoting cohesive and peaceful societies. Studies highlight that interpreting Quranic texts and other religious scriptures through the lens of moderation, contextualization, and ethical relevance enhances understanding among diverse religious groups (Anam, Fanani, & Syahputra, 2023; Mahmud, 2025). Similarly, initiatives led by interfaith actors, particularly women's movements and educational institutions, contribute significantly to civic education and community engagement (Salim, Mantu, & Alfiyani, 2026; R'boul & Yazidi, 2026). These findings underscore the importance of translating theological insights into actionable social strategies, reinforcing the relevance of hermeneutic approaches like *Ma'na-cum-Maghza*.

In summary, the literature demonstrates strong connections between religious narratives, ethical behavior, prosociality, and social cohesion. Prosocial attitudes can be nurtured through interreligious contact, education, media, and hermeneutic engagement, while ethical



frameworks such as *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin* provide normative guidance for social integration (Ahyani, Slamet, & Tobroni, 2021; Aji, Che-Ha, & Md Zabri, 2025). Despite substantial research on interreligious understanding and tolerance, gaps remain in systematically linking theological hermeneutics, such as the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* approach, with practical strategies for fostering interfaith harmony and SDG 16 objectives. This review establishes the theoretical and empirical foundations for examining how the ascension of Prophet Isa and similar narratives can inform interreligious engagement, moral education, and community resilience in pluralistic societies (Firdausiyah, 2021; Syamsuddin, 2017; Mahmud, 2025).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a descriptive-comparative approach to examine the significance of Prophet Isa's ascension in promoting interreligious understanding, social cohesion, and ethical behavior. A qualitative methodology is most appropriate for exploring complex religious narratives and their societal implications, as it allows for a nuanced interpretation of theological concepts and ethical values that cannot be fully captured through quantitative methods (D'Agostino & Asadullah, 2025; Firdausiyah, 2021). The descriptive-comparative design provides a structured way to analyze similarities and differences across religious traditions while maintaining contextual depth. Philosophically, the study aligns with a constructivist epistemology, recognizing that knowledge emerges from interpretation and reflection on textual and contextual realities. The *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* hermeneutical framework guides the analysis in three stages: historical meaning (*ma'na al-tarikhi*), historical purpose (*al-maghza al-tarikhi*), and contemporary relevance (*al-maghza al-mu'ashirah*), allowing classical Islamic teachings to be connected with modern social and ethical applications, including initiatives aimed at achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Syamsuddin, 2017; Mahmud, 2025).

The sources analyzed in this study consist of a carefully curated corpus of primary and secondary texts. Primary sources include the Qur'an, Hadith, and the Bible, while secondary sources comprise classical tafsir, contemporary academic studies on comparative religion, and digital media discussions concerning Prophet Isa's ascension and interfaith dialogue (Heryana et al., 2025; Wulandari, 2022). Selection criteria focused on relevance to the ascension narrative, credibility, and diversity of theological viewpoints, ensuring a balanced representation of ethical, moral, and social dimensions across Islamic and interreligious contexts. Data collection involved a systematic literature review and thematic content analysis, whereby texts were organized according to tradition, source type, and thematic emphasis on moral guidance, social responsibility, and prosocial behavior. Each text was then examined through the three stages of the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* framework: historical meaning was identified by contextualizing the narrative within early Islamic discourse; historical purpose captured its intended moral, social, and spiritual lessons; and contemporary relevance emphasized practical applications for education, civic engagement, and interfaith initiatives. Comparative analysis across religions highlighted both convergences and divergences, facilitating the identification of universal ethical principles that can guide interreligious understanding and cooperative social practices (Polak, 2020; Griera, 2020).



Data analysis followed an iterative and reflexive process to enhance validity and reliability. Texts were read multiple times, coded thematically, and cross-referenced across traditions. Coding categories included theological significance, ethical guidance, social implications, and potential for promoting interfaith dialogue. Reflexivity was applied to mitigate researcher bias and ensure transparency in interpretive decisions. In addition, secondary analyses of policy documents and educational programs related to SDG 16 were incorporated to connect textual insights with real-world applications, demonstrating how theological interpretations can inform peacebuilding, civic education, and social cohesion initiatives (Salim, Mantu, & Alfiyani, 2026). The *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* framework further strengthened the methodology by providing a clear, structured lens for extracting meaning, purpose, and actionable insights from religious texts. For instance, the historical purpose stage clarifies the social and moral intentions behind Isa's ascension, while the contemporary relevance stage operationalizes these principles in educational curricula, community initiatives, and interfaith programs, ensuring practical relevance without compromising textual integrity (Thomsen, 2022; R'boul & Yazidi, 2026).

Overall, this methodology provides a systematic, transparent, and academically rigorous approach to investigating Prophet Isa's ascension. By integrating descriptive-comparative analysis with *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* hermeneutics, the study ensures that interpretations are contextually grounded, analytically robust, and socially meaningful. The approach facilitates replicability, enhances scholarly credibility, and bridges theological knowledge with practical strategies for fostering interreligious understanding, ethical social behavior, and SDG 16-oriented outcomes. Through this combination of textual, comparative, and applied analysis, the research not only contributes to scholarly discourse on Islamic hermeneutics and interfaith studies but also offers actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and community leaders seeking to build inclusive, peaceful, and socially responsible societies.

RESULTS

The *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* analysis of textual sources reveals multi-layered insights into the ascension of Prophet Isa (Jesus) and its implications for interreligious understanding, social cohesion, and contemporary civic ethics. At the historical meaning stage (*ma'na al-tarikhi*), Islamic sources consistently emphasize that Isa was raised to heaven by Allah without undergoing crucifixion, affirming his prophetic authority and divine protection (Syamsuddin, 2017; Firdausiyah, 2021; Heryana et al., 2025). Classical Tafsir literature, such as interpretations by Al-Tabari and Al-Qurtubi, reinforces this narrative, highlighting integrity, moral steadfastness, and trust in divine decree as central teachings (Mahmud, 2025; Umaroh, 2021). Similarly, contemporary Qur'anic interpretations extend this understanding to include ethical leadership, prosocial behavior, and promotion of justice within society (Ahyani, Slamet, & Tobroni, 2021; Ghifari et al., 2025). Comparative textual analysis across religious traditions reveals both convergence and divergence. Christian sources affirm the ascension of Jesus following crucifixion, focusing on salvation, divine grace, and the promise of the second coming (Aji, Che-Ha, & Md Zabri, 2025). Jewish interpretations generally do not recognize Isa's ascension as doctrinally significant, while Hindu and Buddhist perspectives tend to emphasize moral, ethical, and spiritual lessons associated with Isa as a symbolic figure rather



than a historical event (Polak, 2020; Griera, 2020). This stage of analysis establishes a foundational understanding of the ascension event as both a historical and moral construct, providing baseline data for subsequent comparative evaluation.

The second analytical stage, identifying the historical purpose (*al-maghza al-tarikhi*) of Isa’s ascension, clarifies the intended social, ethical, and spiritual functions of the narrative. In Islam, the ascension demonstrates God’s justice and mercy, while positioning prophets as exemplars of righteousness, patience, and social responsibility (Syamsuddin, 2017; Mahmud, 2025; Anam, Fanani, & Syahputra, 2023). These principles align with prosocial behavior and intergroup cooperation, facilitating moral guidance that extends to civic engagement and public ethics (Ardi & Budiarti, 2020; Aji, Che-Ha, & Md Zabri, 2025). In Christian theology, the ascension signifies the culmination of Jesus’ salvific mission, providing moral hope and a framework for communal ethical behavior (Polak, 2020). Hindu-Buddhist sources, while non-theistic, interpret Isa symbolically to promote universal values such as compassion, ethical decision-making, and social cohesion (Griera, 2020). Comparative analysis demonstrates a pattern of shared ethical motifs across religions, particularly emphasizing moral guidance, social responsibility, and human dignity. These findings suggest that despite theological divergences, religious texts converge on promoting ethical and prosocial conduct, which can directly inform contemporary educational and civic initiatives.

The third stage, contemporary relevance (*al-maghza al-mu’ashirah*), synthesizes historical meaning and purpose to derive actionable insights for modern society, education, and policy. Islamic interpretations link Isa’s ascension to civic responsibility, interreligious tolerance, and ethical leadership, offering concrete pathways for social cohesion and justice (Heryana et al., 2025; Firdausiyah, 2021; Ahyani, Slamet, & Tobroni, 2021). Comparative analysis highlights that Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist ethical motifs reinforce similar civic and moral objectives, demonstrating the potential for interfaith dialogue to cultivate shared values without diluting doctrinal integrity (Polak, 2020; Griera, 2020; R’boul & Yazidi, 2026). Furthermore, the integration of these insights into contemporary educational programs, digital media, and public discourse has been empirically linked to improved tolerance, reduced prejudice, and enhanced civic engagement (Fakhrudin, Wibisono, & Nase, 2026; Salim, Mantu, & Alfiyani, 2026). These findings substantiate the relevance of Isa’s ascension narrative for promoting SDG 16 objectives—peace, justice, and strong institutions—by offering concrete mechanisms for ethical reasoning, conflict resolution, and community development (Thomsen, 2022; Ardi & Budiarti, 2020; Nasrulloh et al., 2025).

Table 1. Comparative Perspectives on Prophet Isa’s Ascension and Social Implications

Religion	Historical Meaning (<i>Ma’na</i>)	Purpose/Message (<i>Maghza</i>)	Contemporary Relevance (<i>Al-Maghza al-Mu’ashirah</i>)
Islam	Raised to heaven without crucifixion	Divine protection, prophetic authority	Ethical guidance, interreligious tolerance, civic responsibility
Christianity	Ascension after crucifixion	Salvation, divine grace, second coming	Moral role model, communal harmony, promotion of hope
Judaism	Not recognized doctrinally	—	Social ethics within community context



Religion	Historical Meaning (<i>Ma'na</i>)	Purpose/Message (<i>Maghza</i>)	Contemporary Relevance (<i>Al-Maghza al-Mu'ashirah</i>)
Hinduism	Symbolic moral figure	Spiritual and ethical lessons	Moral education, social cohesion, ethical decision-making
Buddhism	Symbolic figure	Moral and philosophical teachings	Cultivation of compassion, non-violence, civic responsibility

Source: Authors' own analysis based on comparative *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* evaluation of primary religious texts (Qur'an, Bible, classical Tafsir) and contemporary scholarly interpretations.

The table illustrates consistent patterns: across religious traditions, ethical and moral guidance emerges as a primary function of Isa's ascension, while doctrinal specifics vary. Analysis of textual sources indicates that these shared motifs can serve as a practical framework for educational curricula, policy-making, and digital-based civic engagement. For instance, Islamic sources integrate spiritual meaning with civic responsibility, Christian narratives emphasize communal ethical behavior, and Hindu-Buddhist perspectives reinforce moral education and compassion. These findings demonstrate that comparative religious analysis, coupled with *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* methodology, produces systematic insights that are both academically rigorous and socially actionable.

Finally, the results identify specific mechanisms through which textual insights translate into real-world social impact. Social media platforms and digital sermons have been shown to significantly influence attitudes toward tolerance and prosocial behavior (Fakhrudin, Wibisono, & Nase, 2026). Moreover, the integration of ethical narratives from Isa's ascension into public education, interfaith workshops, and community programs enhances social cohesion, mitigates intergroup prejudice, and fosters civic responsibility (Salim, Mantu, & Alfiyani, 2026; Nasrulloh et al., 2025). The analysis also highlights that the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* framework ensures interpretive consistency, allowing classical theological narratives to address contemporary ethical and civic challenges effectively. By systematically linking historical meaning, intended purpose, and contemporary relevance, the study demonstrates that religious teachings can serve as robust instruments for achieving SDG 16 objectives, particularly in pluralistic societies where interfaith understanding and social harmony are critical (Thomsen, 2022; Ardi & Budiarti, 2020; Heryana et al., 2025).

In summary, the Results section presents a structured account of textual analysis, comparative findings, and actionable insights derived from the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* approach. Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist perspectives reveal both convergence in ethical principles and divergence in doctrinal interpretation. By emphasizing patterns of moral guidance, civic responsibility, and social cohesion, the study provides empirically grounded evidence on how the ascension of Prophet Isa can contribute to peacebuilding, tolerance, and the development of strong institutions, directly supporting SDG 16 and informing educational, policy, and community interventions.

DISCUSSION

The ascension of Prophet Isa, as interpreted within Islamic tradition, extends beyond theological significance, influencing moral, social, and interreligious dimensions. The findings



of this study indicate that understanding Isa's ascension through the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* framework allows a structured interpretation that emphasizes historical meaning, purpose, and contemporary relevance. Unlike descriptive approaches that merely recount the narrative, this framework facilitates critical engagement with the text, revealing ethical and social lessons applicable to modern society. The theological interpretation, emphasizing divine protection and prophetic authority, thus serves as a foundation for interreligious dialogue by highlighting unique religious perspectives while fostering mutual respect (Syamsuddin, 2017; Firdausiyah, 2021). This analytical depth aligns with the goals of SDG 16, promoting inclusive, peaceful, and just societies by cultivating ethical and socially responsible behavior grounded in religious narratives.

Applying the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* lens, the historical meaning (*ma'na al-tarikhi*) of Isa's ascension situates the event within its canonical and socio-historical context. By reconstructing the original interpretations in early Islamic scholarship, the study clarifies how Isa's ascension exemplified prophetic mission and divine guidance. More importantly, the historical purpose (*al-maghza al-tarikhi*) highlights universal ethical principles such as justice, nonviolence, and moral responsibility embedded in the Qur'anic narrative. These principles resonate across multiple religious traditions, suggesting that theological constructs can serve as a vehicle for fostering common ethical ground (Aji, Che-Ha, & Md Zabri, 2025; Anam, Fanani, & Syahputra, 2023). Thus, *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* enables the reinterpretation of classical texts not as static dogma, but as dynamic ethical frameworks relevant to contemporary interreligious engagement.

Comparative analysis further demonstrates that diverse religious perspectives converge on moral and ethical implications despite doctrinal differences. Christianity emphasizes the miraculous and salvific aspects of Jesus' ascension, while Judaism does not recognize the event doctrinally, and Hinduism and Buddhism approach Isa's life symbolically, emphasizing ethical teachings rather than historical accuracy (Polak, 2020; Griera, 2020). This plurality provides fertile ground for interfaith education, encouraging empathy and reducing prejudice without diluting the integrity of each tradition. As prior studies suggest, prosocial behavior in intergroup contexts is enhanced when participants recognize shared ethical values across faiths, fostering social cohesion and tolerance (Kanas, Scheepers, & Sterkens, 2017; Ardi & Budiarti, 2020). The *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* framework, therefore, operationalizes these insights by translating textual understanding into practical guidance for promoting societal harmony.

The implications for Islamic education are particularly significant. By integrating historical meaning, purpose, and contemporary message, educators can design curricula that bridge scriptural knowledge and modern social realities. Lessons derived from Isa's ascension—such as ethical leadership, patience, and social justice—can inform faith-based education programs aimed at cultivating responsible citizens (D'Agostino & Asadullah, 2025; Ahyani, Slamet, & Tobroni, 2021). This approach echoes the findings of Ghifari et al. (2025) and Muthohirin (2025), who argue that revitalizing religious curricula with ethical and contextual analysis enhances social resilience and civic engagement. Consequently, religious education, guided by *Ma'na-cum-Maghza*, becomes a proactive tool in supporting SDG 16 targets, particularly in reducing violence and strengthening inclusive institutions.



Community engagement emerges as another critical application. By emphasizing shared ethical narratives, such as justice and nonviolence, communities can collaboratively foster social cohesion and conflict prevention (Ashafa & Raimi, 2024; Anam, Fanani, & Syahputra, 2023). The principles of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, or universal mercy, embedded in Isa's ascension, provide a conceptual bridge for interreligious cooperation in multicultural societies. Such integration is not merely theoretical; practical initiatives informed by these values can enhance civic participation, ethical governance, and local peacebuilding efforts (Salim, Mantu, & Alfiyani, 2026; Stanberry, 2024). By emphasizing ethical convergence rather than doctrinal uniformity, religious teachings can directly contribute to the development of inclusive and resilient social institutions.

Digital media and technology offer additional avenues for contextualizing these ethical insights. The study's findings highlight the role of online religious sermons and educational content in shaping tolerance and prosocial behavior (Fakhrudin, Wibisono, & Nase, 2026; Dwivedi et al., 2022). By leveraging digital platforms to disseminate interpretations grounded in *Ma'na-cum-Maghza*, Islamic educators and interfaith leaders can reach broader audiences, promoting ethical reflection and social responsibility. This approach aligns with contemporary challenges in interreligious understanding, where misinformation and online polarization often hinder dialogue. Effectively integrating theological scholarship into digital education reinforces ethical norms and encourages inclusive behavior, demonstrating a practical mechanism for achieving SDG 16 goals in modern society.

Methodologically, the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* framework provides a rigorous tool for interreligious and ethical analysis. By distinguishing between historical meaning, historical purpose, and contemporary relevance, this approach avoids dogmatic rigidity while promoting nuanced engagement with sacred texts (Heryana et al., 2025; Mahmud, 2025). In comparative contexts, such a framework facilitates critical evaluation of convergent ethical principles across traditions, strengthening interfaith dialogue and conflict mitigation strategies. The approach is consistent with the argument that textual interpretation should support actionable social outcomes rather than purely theoretical exegesis (Firdausiyah, 2021; Umaroh, 2021).

The societal implications of these findings are substantial. Understanding Isa's ascension through *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* can inform civic education, social policy, and community leadership. By framing theological insight as a source of ethical guidance, policymakers and educators can foster socially responsible, morally aware communities (Ahyani, Slamet, & Tobroni, 2021; D'Amore et al., 2026). Such a perspective emphasizes proactive citizenship, ethical governance, and sustainable community development, thereby reinforcing the objectives of SDG 16, including reducing violence, promoting justice, and strengthening inclusive institutions.

Finally, the study contributes to the broader discourse on interreligious understanding and global ethics. By systematically analyzing historical, ethical, and contemporary dimensions of religious texts, the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* framework demonstrates that theology can be a source of social transformation rather than merely doctrinal reflection. The ascension narrative of Prophet Isa thus serves as a model for ethical leadership, moral reasoning, and intercultural



engagement, offering tangible pathways to foster peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. The findings reaffirm that religious scholarship, when critically applied, can bridge historical understanding and contemporary social imperatives, contributing meaningfully to SDG 16 targets and beyond (Tilahun, Gatisso, & Ali, 2026; R'boul & Yazidi, 2026).

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the ascension of Prophet Isa (Jesus) from the Islamic perspective, emphasizing its theological, ethical, and social significance. By employing the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* hermeneutical framework, the research analyzed the historical meaning, historical purpose, and contemporary message of the Qur'anic narrative, revealing how Isa's ascension conveys universal lessons on moral integrity, patience, and social responsibility. Comparative analysis with Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism further highlighted shared ethical values, demonstrating that interreligious understanding can be strengthened without compromising core religious teachings. These insights directly address the research questions by clarifying Islamic theological perspectives, interpreting the social and ethical implications of Isa's ascension, and illustrating how comparative religious knowledge fosters peaceful coexistence.

Theoretically, the study contributes to Islamic hermeneutics by demonstrating the practical application of *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* in connecting scriptural knowledge to contemporary societal challenges. The approach allows scholars and educators to translate theological insights into actionable frameworks for interfaith dialogue, educational curricula, and community engagement. Practically, the findings support Sustainable Development Goal 16 by offering a model for promoting peace, justice, tolerance, and strong social institutions. Knowledge of Isa's ascension, contextualized through *Ma'na-cum-Maghza*, equips individuals and communities with ethical guidance for fostering social cohesion, reducing prejudice, and cultivating responsible citizenship in pluralistic societies.

Despite its contributions, this study acknowledges several limitations. The research primarily relied on textual and literature analysis, limiting empirical verification of interreligious attitudes. The comparative scope was restricted to selected religious traditions, potentially overlooking perspectives from other faiths. Additionally, the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* interpretation depends on scholarly exegesis, which may vary across interpreters. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating field studies, expanding the range of religious and cultural contexts, and exploring the practical implementation of *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* in educational and community programs to validate and enrich its applicability.

In summary, the ascension of Prophet Isa, interpreted through the *Ma'na-cum-Maghza* framework, offers both theoretical and practical insights for fostering interreligious understanding and ethical social engagement. The study answers the research questions by elucidating the Islamic perspective, demonstrating the hermeneutical contribution of *Ma'na-cum-Maghza*, and showing how comparative religious knowledge can advance tolerance and peace. By linking theological scholarship to contemporary societal challenges, these findings



provide a concise roadmap for promoting ethical leadership, social cohesion, and inclusive communities, thereby supporting the vision of SDG 16 in modern pluralistic societies.

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