

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS: *BHINNEKA TUNGGAL IKA* (Unity in Diversity)

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Abstract: *The interpretation of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity) has long been invoked in Indonesia's religious, national, and cultural discourse. While normatively understood as a call for tolerance and harmony, it has rarely been examined critically through the lenses of Qur'anic exegesis and discourse analysis. This article investigates how the discourse of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika is constructed and deployed within religious texts and broader social narratives, highlighting its implications for power and ideology. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, the study explores how narratives of unity often function less as inclusive engagements with diversity and more as instruments for legitimizing the dominance of majority groups or state authorities. Such interpretations tend to suppress alternative perspectives, particularly those voiced by marginalized communities. The findings indicate that the discourse of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika in tafsir is not neutral or universal but shaped by hegemonic interests and institutional frameworks that privilege uniformity over plurality. The study argues that religious interpretation must move toward a more critical and inclusive hermeneutics—one that not only affirms common values but also recognizes difference as an epistemic and spiritual resource. The broader implication is the necessity of opening tafsir studies to interdisciplinary approaches and dialogical engagement. By doing so, religious discourse can become more just, reflective, and liberating, contributing to a pluralistic public sphere that genuinely honors Indonesia's foundational principle of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika.*

Keywords: *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, Critical Discourse Analysis, Ideology, Power Relations, Qur'anic Exegesis.*

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Abstrak: Interpretasi *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* telah lama menjadi rujukan dalam wacana keagamaan, kebangsaan, dan kebudayaan di Indonesia. Selama ini ia lebih banyak dipahami secara normatif sebagai ajakan menuju toleransi dan harmoni, namun jarang dikaji secara kritis melalui perspektif tafsir Al-Qur'an dan analisis wacana. Artikel ini menelaah bagaimana wacana *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* dibangun dan dimanfaatkan dalam teks keagamaan maupun narasi sosial yang lebih luas, serta implikasinya terhadap relasi kuasa dan ideologi. Dengan menggunakan analisis wacana kritis, penelitian ini mengungkap bahwa narasi persatuan kerap berfungsi bukan sebagai ruang keterlibatan inklusif dengan keberagaman, melainkan sebagai instrumen legitimasi dominasi kelompok mayoritas atau otoritas negara. Penafsiran semacam ini cenderung menekan kemungkinan hadirnya perspektif alternatif, terutama dari kelompok-kelompok marjinal. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa wacana *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* dalam tafsir tidak bersifat netral atau universal, melainkan dibentuk oleh kepentingan hegemonik dan kerangka institusional yang lebih mengutamakan keseragaman daripada pluralitas. Studi ini menegaskan perlunya pendekatan hermeneutis yang lebih kritis dan inklusif—yakni penafsiran yang tidak hanya menekankan nilai-nilai kesamaan, tetapi juga mengakui perbedaan sebagai sumber epistemik dan spiritual. Implikasi lebih luasnya adalah pentingnya membuka kajian tafsir terhadap metodologi interdisipliner dan dialogis, sehingga wacana keagamaan dapat menjadi lebih adil, reflektif, dan membebaskan, serta benar-benar menghormati prinsip dasar bangsa Indonesia: *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Analisis Wacana Kritis, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, Ideologi, Relasi Kuasa, Tafsir Al-Qur'an.*

Introduction

The concept of Unity in Diversity has long served as a national and religious foundation in Indonesia—echoing the spirit of tolerance and equality.¹ However, behind this noble narrative lies a dynamic of interpretive discourse that is not always neutral, especially when examined through the lens of critical discourse analysis. According to Fairclough,² discourse is always embedded within power

1 Dellarosa examines the representation of religion in Indonesian primary school textbooks using a Critical Discourse Analysis approach and finds that characters from minority religious groups are almost absent, while majority group characters dominate the narratives. This imbalance reflects the power relations and ideologies at work within the education system, where representation is used as a tool for constructing social meaning. Dellarosa emphasizes that the symbolic absence of minority groups in educational materials not only reflects curricular bias but also constitutes a form of ideological exclusion that contradicts the spirit of diversity and the values of Unity in Diversity. Maretha Dellarosa, "Where Am I?" A Critical Discourse Analysis of Religious Representation in Indonesia," *IAFOR Journal of Education* 9, no. 6 (December 2021): 126–43, <https://doi.org/10.22492/ije.9.6.07>.

2 Discourse, as articulated by Fairclough, is closely tied to power relations and ideology, functioning as a tool of domination. His framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emphasizes that language is not merely a medium of communication, but a mechanism that both shapes and is shaped by social structures. This perspective reveals how discourse can either reinforce or challenge existing power dynamics. Fairclough argues that language can obscure power relations, making them appear natural and transparent, thereby concealing the underlying ideologies that sustain domination. Isolda E. Carranza, "Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language. Norman Fairclough. London: Longman, 1995. Pp. 265," *Applied Psycholinguistics* 18, no. 4 (October 1997): 537–39, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716400010973>.

relations and ideology, where language can function as a tool of domination.³ In the religious domain, interpretations of Unity in Diversity are often reduced to instruments for legitimizing the majority or those in power, while minority voices are marginalized.⁴

Dellarosa's research on Indonesian primary school textbooks, for instance, found that religious minority groups are underrepresented, even though the discourse of tolerance is frequently expressed.⁵ Studies on religious rhetoric—such as the discourse of religious moderation promoted by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs—also reveal strategic elements in constructing identity and shaping a narrative of unity framed by state interests.⁶ This underscores the importance of discourse analysis in examining interpretations of Unity in Diversity: is the discourse genuinely inclusive, or does it marginalize difference under the guise of unity?

Grounded in this critical framework, the present study aims to open new understandings of the interpretation of Unity in Diversity: to reveal who benefits from the unity narrative, who is disadvantaged, and how dialogical spaces can potentially be created. Using a Critical Discourse Analysis approach, this paper explores interpretive discourse, structures of power, and the socio-cultural implications of such religious narratives.⁷ One frequently cited verse used to frame the discourse of Unity in Diversity is Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

“O mankind! Indeed, we created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Truly, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.”

This verse is generally understood as a theological foundation for social tolerance and human equality. However, normative interpretations that have developed are often framed by institutional agendas, particularly by the state and official bodies. A discourse critique of the interpretation of this verse is offered by Sofia Aulia Zakiyatun Nisa, who highlights how interpretations of Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt

3 Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 2009).

4 Roja Lukmanul Khovid, “Analisis Wacana Kritis Norman Fairclough Atas Wacana Kepemimpinan dalam Tafsir Al-Manār Karya Muḥammad ‘Abduh dan Rasyīd Ridhā,” *Ta’wiluna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur’an, Tafsir dan Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 3 (December 2024): 662–79, <https://doi.org/10.58401/takwiluna.v5i3.1824>.

5 Dellarosa, “Where Am I?” A Critical Discourse Analysis of Religious Representation in Indonesia”, 126–143.

6 Martalia Martalia, Andri Ashadi, and Susilawati Susilawati, “Wacana Moderasi Beragama Kementerian Agama: Analisis Wacana Kritis Norman Fairclough,” *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia (JSAI)* 5, no. 1 (March 2024): 88–106, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jesai.v5i1.4312>.

7 Martalia, Ashadi, and Susilawati, “Wacana Moderasi Beragama Kementerian Agama”, 88–106.

[49]: 13 on the platform of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs promote a symbolic narrative of tolerance that aligns with state policies yet falls short of substantively acknowledging the lived experiences of minority groups. In her work “The Concept of Tolerance in Diversity: An Analysis of the Interpretation of Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13,” Sofia Aulia Zakiyatun Nisa critiques the Ministry’s online tafsir, which, though normatively encouraging three principles of tolerance—mutual understanding, mutual help, and cooperation—is heavily influenced by institutional interests through state-sanctioned curricula and official platforms. As a result, the meaning of Unity in Diversity becomes instrumentalized as a tool for institutional legitimacy, without deeply penetrating the inclusive symbolic practices at the social level.⁸

In her analysis, the emphasis on “*knowing one another*” (*lita’ārafū*) is interpreted in a moralistic and idealistic manner, but neglects the practical dimensions, such as equal representation in public policy and educational curricula. Thus, in this context, Unity in Diversity functions more as a hegemonic slogan than as a dialogical principle that accommodates differences fairly. This critique shows that interpretations of Unity in Diversity in Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 do not merely serve as a moral narrative but also as an ideological arena that disregards the voices and realities of diversity beyond the framework of state policy.

Relevant previous studies demonstrate that critique of interpretive discourse has developed in several directions. First, Mursyid, Al Baihaqi, and Murtafi’ah examined the relationship between state-sanctioned interpretations and interreligious pluralism discourse in Indonesia, finding that such interpretations often represent the institutional interests of the state rather than the needs of a diverse society.⁹ Second, Kara and Haj Saleh examined the position of exegetes toward *Isrā’iliyyāt* elements in Qur’anic narratives, demonstrating how the construction of interpretive discourse can influence the ideological understanding of texts.¹⁰

Third, Demir investigated debates around the authenticity of Qur’anic expressions in the tradition of tafsir and its internal critique, emphasizing the importance of methodological distinctions in understanding interpretive authority.¹¹ Fourth, Rosyida, Aziz, Danial, and Gambari explored counter-

8 Sofia Aulia Zakiyatun Nisa, “Konsep Toleransi dalam Keberagaman: Analisis Atas Penafsiran Q 49: 13 dalam al-Qur’an dan Tafsir Kemenag Versi Website,” *Contemporary Quran* 1, no. 1 (June 2021): 40, <https://doi.org/10.14421/cq.2021.0101-05>.

9 Achmad Yafik Mursyid, Muhammad Dzilfikri AlBaihaqi, and Alvy Ra’isatul Murtafi’ah, “Politics and Pluralism: Analyzing State Official Tafsir and Interfaith Discourse in Indonesia,” *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur’an dan Hadis* 25, no. 1 (May 2024): 57–75, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i1.5379>.

10 Mustafa Kara and Muna Haj Saleh, “Mawqif al-Mufasssirin min al-Isrā’iliyyāt wa Madā ‘Alāqatihā bi-Tafsīr al-Qaṣaṣ al-Qur’āniyyah,” *Tefsir Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4, no. 2 (October 2020): 287–311, <https://doi.org/10.31121/tader.740592>.

11 Zakir Demir, “Kur’an Lafızlarının Aidiyetine Dair Tefsir Geleneğindeki Tartışmalar ve Bunların Kritiği,” *Kader* 20, no. 1 (June 2022): 345–68, <https://doi.org/10.18317/kaderdergi.1052480>.

extremism discourse in Abu Nur Jazuli Amaith's *Tafsir al-Fātiḥah*, finding that narratives of moderation can be developed from the roots of classical exegesis through contextual discourse approaches.¹² These studies provide an important foundation for the present research, which specifically critiques the discourse of Unity in Diversity interpretation in contemporary Indonesian contexts. The research gap lies in the absence of a study that specifically critiques the interpretation of Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 within the framework of Unity in Diversity using a Critical Discourse Analysis approach. Previous studies have examined Qur'anic interpretation in relation to state institutions, ideological bias (such as *Isrā'iliyyāt*), and counter-extremism narratives. However, they have not thoroughly explored how the concepts of unity and diversity are constructed, distributed, and reproduced within interpretive discourse—whether classical, contemporary, or state-sanctioned. Therefore, this study fills an important gap by focusing its analysis on how this verse is employed to construct ideological legitimacy in formal religious documents, while offering a critique of dominant interpretations and proposing alternative readings that are more inclusive and ethically grounded. This study employs a qualitative approach¹³ with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)¹⁴ as the primary analytical tool. This approach is chosen to uncover the ideological structures and power relations embedded in interpretive discourses concerning the concept of Unity in Diversity, particularly in tafsir texts, religious documents, and institutional religious narratives.

The first stage of this research is data collection.¹⁵ Primary data consists of

12 Hanik Rosyida et al., “The Discourse on Counter-Narratives to Extremism in The Qur'an: A Study of Tafsir al-Fātiḥah by Abu Nur Jazuli Amaith,” *Mutawatir: Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadith* 14, no. 1 (June 2024): 64–83, <https://doi.org/10.15642/mutawatir.2024.14.1.64-83>.

13 Robert C. Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (Boston: Pearson Education, 2007); Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017); Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2011); Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2016).

14 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a qualitative research approach that investigates the relationship between language, ideology, and power. It is used to analyze how discourse shapes and is shaped by social structures. This method entails a thorough examination of texts and their contexts to reveal the underlying power dynamics and ideologies. This approach is beneficial for understanding how language can be used to maintain or challenge power relations in various social settings. CDA involves analyzing both written texts and spoken discourse to reveal the underlying social meanings and power structures. The methodology includes defining the concept of CDA, outlining research procedures, and providing examples of CDA studies. This approach emphasizes the importance of references in supporting analysis—much like fuel to a vehicle—ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the discourse being examined. Andi Farid Baharuddin, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” in *Practical Approaches to Qualitative Language Research: Trend Terbaru dalam Penelitian Bahasa*, ed. Muhammad Basri et al. (Nganjuk: Dewa Publishing, 2022), 47–81.

15 Jose Osvaldo De Sordi, *Qualitative Research Methods in Business* (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 61–75, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-50323-8_5; Jack J. Phillips, *Accountability in Human Resource Management* (Boston: Gulf Professional Publishing, 1999),

Qur'anic exegesis texts (tafsir), especially those interpreting Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13, sourced from classical commentaries such as *Tafsīr al-Manār*, *Tafsīr al-Mishbāh*, and *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, as well as contemporary digital interpretations published by official institutions like the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia. Additional data includes state documents and religious education textbooks—such as the *Islamic Religious Education and Character-Building Student Book*—which represent formal state religious narratives. The second stage is data selection and categorization, where texts relevant to the themes of unity and diversity are filtered and classified into three main categories: (1) Interpretations that support inclusivity and diversity; (2) Interpretations that tend to be normative and homogenizing; (3) Interpretations that explicitly reinforce majority or institutional dominance.

The third stage is data analysis,¹⁶ conducted using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis: (1) Text analysis (linguistic description); (2) Discourse practice analysis (text production and consumption); and (3) Social practice analysis (power relations and ideologies behind the texts). At this stage, the researcher analyzes how sentence structures, word choices, and forms of representation are used to construct meanings of unity and difference within tafsir contexts. The fourth stage is critical interpretation, where the analytical findings are compared with the socio-political contexts in which the discourse develops—particularly in relation to state policies, national narratives, and religious identity politics. The researcher aims to interpret how the meaning of Unity in Diversity is constructed, distributed, and resisted in the arena of contemporary tafsir. The final stage is formulating findings and theoretical reflection, which translates the results of the analysis into a critique of tafsir that is not only deconstructive but also offers alternative approaches that are more inclusive and contextually grounded. Thus, this method not only exposes discursive dominance but also points toward a reconstruction of exegetical approaches that are more ethical and dialogical.

Categories of Tafsir: Three Discourse Patterns of Unity in Diversity

The three interpretations selected here are not intended to cover all exegetical traditions, but rather to represent dominant patterns of Qur'anic interpretation on Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 that are most influential in Indonesian discourse. First, interpretations that support inclusivity and diversity. This is found in *Tafsīr Al-Manār* by Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, who interprets this verse as a divine call

110–46, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-88415-396-2.50009-1>; Sukmawati, Sudarmin, and Salmia, "Development of Quality Instruments and Data Collection Techniques," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran Guru Sekolah Dasar (JPPGuseda)* 6, no. 1 (March 2023): 119–24, <https://doi.org/10.55215/jppguseda.v6i1.7527>.

16 Krittinee Nuttavuthisit, *Qualitative Consumer and Marketing Research* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2019), 239–62, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-6142-5_10; Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1994); Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014).

to transcend ethnic and sectarian fanaticism. Riḍā strongly criticizes the tendency of nations and tribes to boast about their own identities and instead emphasizes the value of *ta'āruf* (mutual knowing) as a path toward universal peace and the recognition of human rights regardless of religious or ethnic backgrounds.¹⁷

Second, normative and homogenizing interpretations, such as those found in *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* and *Tafsīr al-Mishbāh*. In *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, Aḥmad Muṣṭafa al-Marāghī interprets this verse by emphasizing that the purpose of creating human beings into nations and tribes is so that they may know and respect each other, but ultimately placing *taqwā* (piety) as the sole criterion of merit in the sight of God.¹⁸ This interpretation tends to be ethical-theological in nature and does not address current socio-political dynamics. Likewise, in *Tafsīr al-Mishbāh*, Quraish Shihab stresses that the verse is a call not to let differences become sources of conflict, but rather to use them as a means for mutual understanding and enrichment. However, his interpretation places greater emphasis on personal moral meanings, such as individual integrity and spiritual values, without critically addressing issues of minority group underrepresentation in social or state spaces.¹⁹

Third, interpretations that reinforce majority or institutional dominance, as reflected in the Thematic Tafsir published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia and in formal Islamic education materials. In the *Islamic Religious Education and Character-Building* textbook, phrases such as “we are all brothers in Islam” or “all religions teach goodness” are used without any narrative or visual representation of minority religious adherents. This constructs a symbolic narrative that appears neutral but in fact minimizes actual diversity.²⁰ Thus, these three examples are chosen because they represent three influential strands—reformist-universalist, ethical-normative, and institutional-nationalist—showing how the same verse can be mobilized in different ideological directions. Other tafsir works could certainly be explored, but these three are particularly significant for demonstrating the range of interpretive discourse relevant to Indonesia’s religious and national context.

From a practical standpoint, the integration of Qur’anic exegesis into multicultural discourse has profound implications for character education in Indonesia. When tafsir is read not merely as a textual explanation but as a transformative ethical framework, it encourages the cultivation of values such as tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity in educational institutions. In this sense, exegesis becomes a pedagogical tool that reinforces the philosophy of Pancasila, ensuring that religious education does not isolate students from national identity, but rather deepens their sense of belonging to a pluralistic society. This highlights

17 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār* (Kairo: Al-Hay’ah al-Miṣriyyah li al-Kitāb, 1947), 26:345–348.

18 Aḥmad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* (Kairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth, n.d.), 26:252.

19 Muhammad Quraish Shihab, *Tafsīr al-Mishbāh: Pesan, Kesan dan Kekeragaman al-Qur’an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 13:544–546.

20 Muchlis M. Hanafi et al., *Tafsīr Tematik Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur’an Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2022).

the importance of engaging teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers in re-reading tafsir with a pedagogical lens that emphasizes character formation.

Furthermore, in the context of religious moderation, tafsir offers a critical mechanism for navigating the tension between universal religious ideals and local socio-political realities. Exegesis that foregrounds *wasatīyyah* (moderation) is not merely a theoretical proposition but a practical necessity in preventing the escalation of exclusivist and radical interpretations. By critically engaging with the Qur'an in ways that affirm Unity in Diversity, Indonesian society can foster a more dialogical and inclusive public sphere. Such an approach strengthens interfaith harmony, curtails the misuse of religion for political purposes, and nurtures a civic identity that is both deeply Islamic and authentically Indonesian.

Text and Discourse Practice Analysis

Textual analysis reveals that lexical choices such as *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood), *ta'āruf* (mutual knowing), and *taqwā* (piety) are repeatedly used as central themes. However, there is no semantic exploration of how these meanings could be actualized within the context of social justice across groups. As has been observed in studies on Islamic education in Indonesia, formal religious texts often emphasize normative ideals of harmony without critically engaging with the realities of pluralism and inequality.²¹ In formal educational texts, these narratives do not include names or figures from minority religions, remaining general and failing to evoke reflective awareness in students regarding plural realities. At the level of discourse practice, it is evident that these texts are produced within the broader framework of the state's religious moderation discourse. The production of discourse is carried out by dominant actors—within both educational institutions and religious bodies—who tend to use religious narratives as a means of legitimizing policy and as instruments of nationalism.

The analysis of the text and its discourse practices highlight an important tension between normative ideals and lived realities. While the frequent use of concepts such as *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood), *ta'āruf* (mutual knowing), and *taqwā* (piety) reflects a moral orientation toward unity and ethical conduct, these terms remain largely abstract and disconnected from the challenges of pluralism and inequality. Educational texts, in this sense, prioritize the rhetorical promotion of harmony but avoid addressing concrete issues of diversity, such as the recognition of minority groups. This tendency reinforces a symbolic framework where unity is imagined, but the lived realities of difference are overlooked, limiting the critical potential of religious education in fostering genuine inclusivity.

At the discourse practice level, the findings suggest that the production of such texts is closely tied to the state's agenda of religious moderation, where religion is mobilized as both a tool of legitimacy and an extension of nationalism. The absence or minimal presence of minority figures in textbooks illustrates how power

21 Azyumardi Azra, *Islam in the Indonesian World: An Account of Institutional Formation* (Bandung: Mizan, 2006), 211–215; Mujiburrahman, *Feeling Threatened: Muslim–Christian Relations in Indonesia's New Order* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 98–105.

operates through selective representation, shaping young learners' perceptions of social reality. As Dellarosa observes, this exclusion is not incidental but systematic, pointing to deeper dynamics of inequality within the educational system. Thus, the analysis reveals how the interplay between text and discourse practice serves not only pedagogical aims but also broader sociopolitical interests.

Analysis of Social Practices and Critical Reflection

In social practice, the interpretation of Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 is frequently associated with national narratives that emphasize integration, as seen in the Ministry of Religious Affairs' *Moderasi Beragama* document (2019), which explicitly frames the verse within the slogan *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity).²² However, such texts rarely open articulatory spaces for voices from the social margins. In many contexts, the slogan functions as a forced consensus, leaving little room for critique of ongoing inequalities.²³ In other words, this discourse is often employed hegemonically. This study shows that religious interpretation, rather than serving as a dialogical engagement with diversity, tends to reproduce the state's singular narrative and marginalize differences. Therefore, a more reflective, participatory, and context-sensitive hermeneutical approach is urgently needed so that religion truly becomes a unifying force without erasing diversity.

Table 1. Categories of Tafsir Discourse on Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 in Relation to *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity).

No	Tafsir Category		Main Source of Tafsir		Dominant Features	
1	Inclusive and Supportive	Diversity-	<i>Tafsir al-Manār</i> (Rashīd Riḍā)		Emphasizes human universality, critiques ethnocentric or religious exclusivism	
2	Normative Homogenizing	and	<i>Tafsir al-Marāghī</i> , <i>Tafsir al-Mishbāh</i> (Quraish Shihab) ²⁴		Focuses on <i>taqwā</i> as a core value, lacks explicit discussion of social inequality or symbolic domination	
3	Supporting Institutional Domination	Majority/	Thematic Ministry of Religious Affairs Islamic Textbooks	Tafsir by (Kemenag), Education	Formal narratives of tolerance, minimal minority representation, are absorbed into national projects.	

²² Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kemenag, 2019), 45.

²³ Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 212–15.

²⁴ This analysis of Quraish Shihab refers only to his work *Tafsir al-Mishbāh* and does not involve personal clarification with him. Any changes, reinterpretations, or further elaborations by Quraish are therefore beyond the scope of this study.

Visual and Analytical Explanation

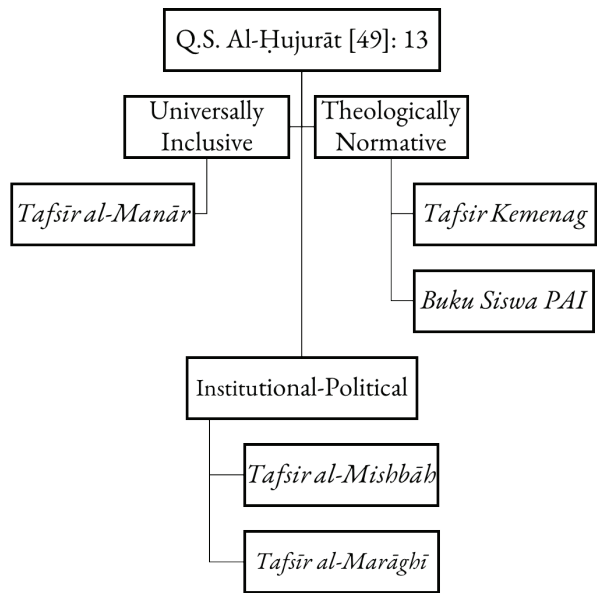


Figure 1. Discourse Mapping of the Tafsir of Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 on Unity in Diversity.

The chart above illustrates how Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 has been interpreted through three major currents:

1. The universal-inclusive approach—represented by *Tafsīr al-Manār*, which emphasizes universal human values, rejects exclusive nationalism, and advocates for interfaith and interethnic brotherhood.
2. The normative-theological approach—as seen in *Tafsīr al-Mishbāḥ* and *al-Marāghī*, which focus on the moral message of the verse but do not contextually engage with issues of representation or social inequality in plural societies.
3. The institutional-political approach—exemplified by tafsir and official documents of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, which use this verse as a normative foundation for the “Religious Moderation” program, yet simultaneously produce a hegemonic narrative without explicit representation of marginalized religions or groups.

These three interpretive trajectories reveal the dynamic interplay between sacred text, interpreter, and the socio-political context that shapes the outcome of interpretation. Tafsir as discourse is not merely an act of textual interpretation but also a reflection of the interpreter’s socio-political position and the intended purpose behind the conveyed meaning.

The findings of this study reveal that Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13—often cited as a theological foundation for the spirit of Unity in Diversity—carries diverse discursive dimensions across various tafsir (interpretations). These differences

in interpretive approaches not only reflect the methodological variations among exegetes (*mufasssīrīn*) but also indicate how tafsir functions as a space of negotiation between the sacred text and the socio-political context in which it is produced and consumed.

Tafsirs such as *al-Manār* explicitly present an inclusive and transnational spirit. Rashīd Riḍā, in his interpretation, not only emphasizes the importance of *taqwā* (piety) as a binding value of humanity but also criticizes social systems that build discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or even religion. His tafsir directly highlights the socio-political dimension of the verse and uses it as a basis to reject exclusivism while advocating for universal brotherhood within the framework of Islamic modernity.²⁵ In contrast, tafsirs such as *al-Marāghī* and *al-Mishbāh* adopt a more normative approach. Quraish Shihab, for instance, interprets the verse by emphasizing internal moral values and personal piety. While this is positive and promotes spiritual awareness, such an approach tends to avoid direct engagement with critiques of social structures or power relations that construct majority-minority identities.²⁶ This normative approach obscures the Qur'an's potential for social critique and risks producing a homogenous and depoliticized reading.

More problematic is the institutionalized tafsir discourse found in state documents such as the thematic tafsir by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs and the *Islamic Religious Education and Character Education* textbook. This study finds that although this verse is explicitly used to support the narrative of religious moderation, representations of minority groups are nearly absent. In this context, Dellarosa's research becomes highly relevant: the absence of representation in textbooks creates an asymmetry in the educational process of diversity.²⁷ When the state monopolizes formal religious interpretation, the meaning of "unity" aligns more closely with symbolic domination than with equitable dialogue.²⁸

In Norman Fairclough's framework of critical discourse analysis, this condition illustrates that the production of tafsir texts is not a neutral process but is shaped by ideology and power relations. Interpretations that appear to support diversity while subtly reinforcing majority narratives represent a form of hegemonic consent constructed by institutions through education, official publications, and curricula. A verse that ought to serve as a spiritual foundation for unifying humankind is instead used to reinforce an exclusive religious nationalism. Thus, critique of tafsir discourse is not an attempt to undermine the scholarly authority of the *mufasssīrīn*, but rather an invitation toward a more ethical, reflective, and contextually responsive approach to interpretation. Unity in Diversity should not merely remain a social slogan but become an epistemological principle in Qur'anic interpretation—so that every community, whether majority or minority, feels acknowledged within an inclusive Islamic semantic space.

25 Riḍā, *Tafsir al-Manār*, 26:346–350.

26 Shihab, *Tafsir al-Mishbāh: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian al-Qur'an*, 13:510–513.

27 Dellarosa, "Where Am I?" A Critical Discourse Analysis of Religious Representation in Indonesia", 126–43.

28 Dellarosa, 126–43.

Classical Tafsir

Classical tafsir traditions provide the earliest systematic attempts to interpret the Qur'an through philological, juristic, and theological lenses. Scholars such as al-Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE) and al-Qurṭubī (d. 1273 CE) sought to situate verses within their historical and linguistic contexts, while also offering jurisprudential reflections for communal guidance. Their methods emphasized reliance on transmitted reports (*riwāyāt*), including *ḥadīth* and opinions of the Companions, as a safeguard against excessive subjectivity in interpretation. However, one limitation within classical tafsir is its tendency toward a descriptive rather than critical engagement with the socio-political structures of its time. Although exegetes occasionally highlighted moral critiques—particularly regarding governance and justice—the frameworks remained anchored within the intellectual paradigms of medieval Islamic thought. This reliance on inherited authority provides stability, but it also means that classical tafsir often resists adaptation to modern challenges.

Nevertheless, classical tafsir continues to function as a foundational reference point in contemporary discourses. Its emphasis on linguistic precision and jurisprudential coherence remains an indispensable methodological base, even when modern interpreters attempt to recontextualize their insights for contemporary audiences.²⁹

Classical tafsir provides a rich methodological and textual foundation,³⁰ yet its descriptive and text-centered approach has clear implications for contemporary discourse. While the emphasis on linguistic accuracy and transmitted reports ensures interpretive stability, it simultaneously limits engagement with socio-political and cultural dynamics that modern societies face.³¹ This suggests that relying exclusively on classical sources may inadvertently reinforce interpretive conservatism, potentially marginalizing alternative perspectives on diversity, social justice, and intergroup relations.³²

29 Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1968), 22:337.

30 Classical tafsir indeed provides a rich methodological and textual foundation, relying on the Prophet Muhammad's explanations, companions' practices, and Hadith literature, which have guided Muslim understanding and shaped the interpretive techniques that continue to influence contemporary Qur'anic studies. Andri Nirwana An et al., "Methods of Qur'an Research and Qur'an Tafseer Research Its Implications for Contemporary Islamic Thought: (Metodologi Tafsir Al-Qur'an)," *Bulletin of Islamic Research* 2, no. 1 (June 2024): 33–42, <https://doi.org/10.69526/bir.v2i1.34>.

31 Classical tafsir, exemplified by scholars like al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, and Ibn Kathīr, offers a rich methodological and textual foundation primarily through a literal textual approach, which contrasts with contemporary interpretations that emphasize contextual relevance and adaptability to modern social dynamics. Muhammad Ardi Kusumawardana, "Metodologi Kontekstual dalam Tafsir Ayat Hukum: Studi Literatur Atas Tafsir Klasik dan Kontemporer," *TSAQOFAH* 4, no. 6 (September 2024): 3882–95, <https://doi.org/10.58578/tsaqofah.v4i6.3877>.

32 Classical tafsir offers a foundational methodology through two primary sources: *bi-al-ma'thūr* and *bi-al-ra'y*, emphasizing interpretations based on historical narratives and personal reasoning. However, it often lacks contextual awareness, leading to interpretations that can be asocial or ahistorical. Irsyadunnas Irsyadunnas and Nurmahni Nurmahni, "Rekonstruksi Tafsir Al-Qu-

From the perspective of character education and religious moderation in Indonesia, classical tafsir offers both opportunities and constraints. On one hand, it instills rigorous attention to textual fidelity and ethical norms.³³ On the other hand, its limited attention to pluralistic realities challenges educators and policymakers seeking to cultivate inclusive values grounded in Qur'anic principles. Thus, integrating classical insights with critical and context-sensitive frameworks—such as reformist tafsir and CDA-informed analyses—becomes essential for ensuring that Qur'anic exegesis can both honor tradition and respond meaningfully to the pluralistic and multicultural context of contemporary Indonesian society.

Modern Reformist Tafsir

The modern reformist movement emerged during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as Muslim scholars confronted colonial modernity, scientific rationalism, and the global spread of secular ideologies. Thinkers such as Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905) and Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) pioneered an exegetical project that sought to reconcile revelation with rationality. Their interpretation emphasized the Qur'an's ethical and universal principles, rather than its detailed legal prescriptions.³⁴

This reformist approach frequently highlights values such as justice, social welfare, and educational advancement, presenting Islam as compatible with modern progress. By doing so, reformist tafsir reorients the Qur'an from being primarily a source of *fiqh* (law) into a charter of civilizational ethics. However, critics argue that this method risks oversimplifying complex jurisprudential traditions by privileging rationality over historical textual authority. Despite such criticisms, modern reformist tafsir significantly shaped Muslim intellectual landscapes. It opened avenues for contextualized readings of the Qur'an, particularly in addressing contemporary issues such as women's rights, governance, and interfaith relations. This trend laid the groundwork for later movements that approached tafsir from institutional, sociological, or critical theory perspectives.³⁵

Modern reformist tafsir demonstrates the potential of Qur'anic exegesis to engage dynamically with contemporary social and ethical challenges. By emphasizing justice, education, and social welfare, reformist interpreters such as Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā model an approach that bridges sacred text and lived reality, highlighting Islam's capacity to inform pluralistic and inclusive

ran Kontemporer (Studi Analisis Sumber dan Metode Tafsir)," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 1 (May 2020): 21, <https://doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v22i1.6119>.

33 The research indicates that classical tafsir offers a significant methodological foundation, emphasizing the divine and human dimensions of the Quran. This foundation is essential for developing contemporary tafsir methodologies that address modern challenges through integrative approaches. Irwandi Mamonto, "Ontologi, Epistemologi, dan Aksiologi Serta Aktualisasinya Pada Studi Islam (Tafsir)," *Mauriduna: Journal of Islamic Studies* 5, no. 2 (December 2024): 965–75, <https://doi.org/10.37274/mauriduna.v5i2.1356>.

34 Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2006), 16: 342.

35 Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Aẓīm* (Riyāḍ: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1999), 7:289.

public life. Their work illustrates how interpretation can be proactive, not merely descriptive, in shaping moral and civic consciousness.

However, this approach also entails certain tensions. Prioritizing rationality and universal ethics sometimes risks downplaying the nuanced jurisprudential and historical frameworks embedded in classical tafsir. In the context of Indonesia, reformist tafsir offers valuable resources for character education and religious moderation, particularly in promoting tolerance and interfaith understanding. Yet its successful application requires careful integration with local socio-cultural realities, pedagogical methods, and state policies on religious plurality. Overall, modern reformist tafsir provides both a critical corrective to static readings and a constructive framework for nurturing inclusive, socially responsive interpretations of the Qur'an.

Institutional Tafsir

Institutional tafsir refers to exegetical practices embedded within organized religious and educational structures, such as universities, madrasahs, and state-sponsored councils. Unlike classical scholars who often wrote as individuals, institutional tafsir reflects collective authority and responds to the needs of structured communities. Examples include modern fatwa councils or university curricula where tafsir is taught systematically alongside contemporary sciences.³⁶

The strength of institutional tafsir lies in its ability to disseminate standardized interpretations that ensure consistency across communities. By incorporating curricular reforms, institutions often frame tafsir within broader socio-political objectives, including national identity formation, interreligious dialogue, or public morality campaigns. For instance, in Southeast Asia, institutional tafsir projects frequently intertwine Qur'anic interpretation with discourses of nationalism and development.³⁷ However, institutional tafsir can also be criticized for its alignment with power structures. The potential risk lies in its use as a tool of ideological legitimization, where interpretations may be tailored to support state agendas rather than to challenge injustice. This dynamic illustrates the dual role of tafsir in both preserving religious heritage and engaging with political realities in a controlled manner.³⁸

Institutional tafsir demonstrates how Qur'anic interpretation can be systematically integrated into educational and state frameworks, providing coherence and accessibility for broad audiences.³⁹ Its strengths lie in promoting

36 Muḥammad 'Abduh, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, ed. Rashīd Riḍā (Cairo: Al-Manār, 1904), 9:370.

37 Howard Federspiel, *Popular Indonesian Literature of the Qur'an* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1994), 56–60.

38 Charles Kurzman, *Modernist Islam, 1840–1940: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 45–47.

39 Institutional tafsir refers to the structured study of Quranic exegesis within mosque institutions, particularly in Perlis, where certified *takmir* teachers facilitate understanding of the Quran through selected tafsir books, enhancing community appreciation and comprehension of Islamic teachings. Muhammad Lukman Mat Sin and Khalilullah Amin Ahmad, "Kitab-Kitab Tafsir dalam

standardized understanding, fostering national cohesion, and supporting interfaith dialogue in plural societies. For instance, when tafsir is embedded in curricula or public religious programs, it helps transmit ethical and moral principles consistently across diverse communities.⁴⁰

Yet, institutional tafsir also carries inherent risks. Aligning closely with state or institutional agendas may prioritize political stability and national ideology over critical engagement with social inequalities or minority perspectives. In the Indonesian context, such tafsir often reinforces narratives of unity and conformity, sometimes marginalizing divergent or minority voices.⁴¹ Therefore, while institutional tafsir plays a vital role in education and societal cohesion, it requires complementary critical and reflective frameworks to ensure that interpretations remain inclusive, ethically sound, and responsive to the lived realities of a pluralistic society.⁴²

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Perspective

The integration of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)⁴³ into tafsir studies represents a contemporary methodological innovation. By focusing on the interplay between text, discourse, and power, CDA highlights how Qur'anic

Pengajian Takmir di Institusi Masjid di Perlis: Kajian Tinjauan: Books of Tafsir in Takmir Studies in The Mosque Institutions in Perlis: A Review Study," *Ma'ālim Al-Qur'an Wa al-Sunnah* 17 (December 2021): 51–65, <https://doi.org/10.33102/jmqsv17i2.329>.

40 Institutional tafsir refers to Qur'anic commentaries produced by established institutions, reflecting formal theological frameworks and curricula. These works often emphasize traditional interpretations and authoritative sources, contributing to a conservative approach in contemporary Sunnī exegesis, as discussed in the paper. Johanna Pink, "Tradition, Authority and Innovation in Contemporary Sunnī Tafsir: Towards a Typology of Qur'an Commentaries from the Arab World, Indonesia and Turkey," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12, nos. 1–2 (October 2010): 56–82, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2010.0105>.

41 Institutional tafsir refers to the structured study of tafsir within pesantren, emphasizing traditional methods like *bandongan*. It prioritizes texts like *Tafsīr Jalālayn*, reflecting a slow evolution in response to modernity while maintaining Islamic orthodoxy. Rosihon Anwar, Dadang Darmawan, and Cucu Setiawan, "Kajian Kitab Tafsir dalam Jaringan Pesantren di Jawa Barat," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Sosial Budaya* 1, no. 1 (February 2016): 56–69, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jw.v1i1.578>.

42 Institutional tafsir refers to the study and interpretation of the Qur'an within formal educational settings, particularly in Islamic institutions. The paper emphasizes revitalizing the roles of classical commentators like Zamakhsharī and Bayḍāwī in contemporary Islamic studies. Mu'amar Zayn Qadafy, "Menghidupkan Yang Mati Suri: Walid Saleh dan Revitalisasi Kajian Sejarah Intelektual Tafsir Klasik," *SUHUF* 15, no. 2 (February 2023): 452–48, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v15i2.726>.

43 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines the relationship between language, power, and ideology, revealing hidden influences in social relations. It utilizes systemic functional grammar to analyze discourse, focusing on how language constructs perspectives and values of the powerful class. Xinya Zuo, "A Study of Discourse Strategies from the Perspective of Critical Analysis," *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 9, no. 8 (August 2019): 996, <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0908.16>.

interpretation is never a neutral act, but one embedded within social struggles and ideological frameworks. Scholars adopting this lens often interrogate not only the text itself but also the institutional and political conditions under which tafsir is produced.⁴⁴

For example, when examining verses related to authority, CDA allows us to see how different interpreters emphasize obedience, justice, or resistance depending on their socio-political context. This perspective reveals how tafsir functions as a dynamic negotiation between revelation and power, rather than as a static commentary. Moreover, CDA situates tafsir within broader discursive formations, such as postcolonial identity construction or gender relations, thereby expanding the scope of Qur'anic studies beyond traditional philology.⁴⁵

The strength of this approach lies in its critical and reflexive nature. It challenges readers to ask whose interests are served by particular interpretations and how discourse reinforces or destabilizes social hierarchies. Yet, its limitation may be an underemphasis on the theological and spiritual dimensions that remain central for many Muslim audiences. Thus, CDA should not be seen as replacing traditional tafsir, but as complementing it through an interdisciplinary expansion of interpretive horizons.⁴⁶

The application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to Qur'anic exegesis illuminates the inherently political and ideological dimensions of interpretation. By examining the interaction between text, social practice, and power structures, CDA uncovers how tafsir can both reproduce and challenge hegemonic norms.⁴⁷ This approach demonstrates that interpretations of verses—such as those concerning authority, justice, or community—are shaped not only by textual meaning but also by the social and institutional positions of the exegetes.

From an educational and societal perspective, CDA encourages a more reflective engagement with Qur'anic texts. It prompts scholars and students alike to question whose interests are being served by particular readings and how interpretive choices influence social hierarchies. In the Indonesian context, this lens is especially useful for evaluating how tafsir contributes to national discourse, religious moderation, and pluralism. While CDA may underemphasize spiritual or theological dimensions, its value lies in expanding the hermeneutical toolkit,

44 Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara: Jaringan Global dan Lokal* (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), 112–15.

45 Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 62–65.

46 Martin van Bruinessen, *Pesantren and Kitab Kuning: Continuity and Change in a Tradition of Religious Learning* (Jakarta: P3M, 1994), 21–23.

47 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines language in relation to power, dominance, and social inequality, revealing how discourse shapes societal issues. It empowers learners to critique and transform oppressive structures within education and society, fostering critical awareness and social change. Bijaya Kumar Ranabhat, "Critical Insights: A Perspective on Discourse Analysis," *Journal of Language and Linguistics in Society*, no. 22 (March 2022): 30–36, <https://doi.org/10.55529/jlls.22.30.36>.

offering a critical, interdisciplinary framework that complements classical and reformist tafsir.⁴⁸ Ultimately, CDA promotes a socially conscious interpretation of the Qur'an that is attentive to diversity, inclusion, and ethical responsibility.⁴⁹

Reconstruction of Theory

The analysis of the discourse mapping of Qur'anic exegesis on Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 reveals that the meaning of the sacred text is never monolithic; rather, it remains open to various interpretations shaped by the socio-political and ideological backgrounds of the exegetes. In this regard, Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a vital theoretical instrument for reconstructing the relationship between language, power, and ideology in interpretation.

Fairclough argues that discourse is a social practice operating within three interrelated dimensions: the textual dimension, the discursive practice (text production and consumption), and the wider social practice.⁵⁰ In the interpretation of Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13, these three dimensions are manifested in how interpreters frame the concepts of *ta'āruf* (mutual recognition), *ikhtilāf* (diversity), and *ummah* (community) within the framework of socio-political pluralism. This illustrates that Qur'anic interpretation does not merely reflect textual meaning but actively constructs social notions of pluralism.

This theoretical reconstruction finds that CDA allows us to uncover the process through which interpretation becomes a site of contested meanings—both a tool for the reproduction of and resistance to ideological dominance.⁵¹ In this light, exegesis is not a neutral activity but is deeply embedded in the struggles over meaning in the broader social context. Thus, the CDA approach proves not only effective for critically analyzing religious texts but also for deconstructing hegemonic exegetical authority. This perspective opens space for alternative discourses that are more inclusive and aligned with the values of Unity in Diversity,

48 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a perspective that examines the relationship between language and action within social and political contexts. It encompasses various approaches, including systemic functional linguistics and discourse-historical methods, focusing on ideological functions of linguistic phenomena. Christopher Hart, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *Introducing Linguistics*, ed. Jonathan Culpeper et al. (London: Routledge, 2022), 311–25, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003045571-19>.

49 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines language as discourse within social processes, focusing on interconnections through microstructural (text analysis), mesostructural (production practices), and macrostructural (social and cultural practices) aspects, revealing power dynamics, ideologies, and cultural values in communication. Agus Dadang Hermawan, "Critical Discourse Analysis of Norman Fairclough on Online Media Reporting about the Rohingya Refugee Crisis," *Matapena: Jurnal Keilmuan Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya* 6, no. 2 (December 2023): 549–57, <https://doi.org/10.36815/matapena.v6i02.3064>.

50 Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 64–75.

51 Carranza, "Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language. Norman Fairclough. London: Longman, 1995. Pp. 265," 537–39,

as emphasized in Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13.⁵²

The findings of this study underscore the interpretation of Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13 is not merely an exegetical effort to elucidate theological or linguistic meaning, but also a reflection of deeper social, ideological, and political dynamics. As a sacred text, the Qur'an continues to speak across eras, and its interpretations are continuously negotiated within historical contexts that shape the lenses through which it is understood. This study reveals that exegetes are not passive transmitters of meaning, but active agents who construct religious knowledge based on their positionalities—whether scholarly, cultural, or political. Consequently, the plural interpretations of *ta'āruf*, *ummah*, and *diversity* show how the text serves as a discursive field for negotiating identity, inclusion, and authority.

By applying Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, the researcher found a powerful theoretical framework that unveils the ideological underpinnings behind exegetical discourses. It enables more critical reading of classical and contemporary tafsir, especially regarding issues of social plurality and inter-group relations. Through this approach, the study offers a methodological contribution that links linguistic analysis to broader socio-cultural insights, thus expanding the horizon of Qur'anic studies beyond purely textual-philological boundaries. Ultimately, this research is a call for an inclusive, dialogical, and socially responsive approach to Qur'anic interpretation—one that not only respects the text's sacredness but also engages critically with its lived relevance in pluralistic societies.

Reflecting on the reconstructed theoretical framework, it becomes evident that the practical implications extend beyond textual analysis into the domains of education and social ethics. In the context of character education, the Qur'anic ethos of Unity in Diversity offers an essential foundation for cultivating inclusive values such as tolerance, empathy, and humility. This resonates strongly with the broader efforts to integrate religious instruction with ethical formation, positioning Islamic education not merely as the transmission of knowledge but as a transformative practice for moral growth.

From the perspective of religious moderation, the framework provides an epistemic safeguard against the extremes of exclusivism on one hand and relativism on the other. By situating diversity as a divinely ordained reality, this approach affirms that embracing pluralism does not compromise orthodoxy but rather actualizes it. For this reason, the reconstruction of theory serves not only as an intellectual endeavor but also as a pedagogical and societal mandate, reinforcing Islam's enduring role as a guide for coexistence in diverse modern contexts.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13, which has often been cited as a normative foundation for constructing the narrative of Unity in Diversity, is in fact interpreted in diverse ways by various exegetes—whether in classical,

52 Teun A. van Dijk, *Ideology and Discourse: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* (Barcelona: Pompeu Fabra University, 2000), 36–38.

contemporary, or state-sponsored institutional tafsir works. These interpretive differences are closely tied to ideological positions and the socio-political contexts in which they emerge. Some interpretations, such as *Tafsīr al-Manār*, tend to promote a spirit of inclusivity across identities and reject ethnic or religious discrimination. In contrast, normative interpretations such as *al-Mishbāh* and *al-Marāghī* emphasize moral and spiritual aspects without addressing the structural issues that hinder diversity. Meanwhile, institutional interpretations found in official state documents often reproduce dominant narratives while neglecting the representation of minority groups. From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, the construction of the meaning of “unity” in tafsir is not neutral; it is frequently shaped by power relations that result in cultural hegemony. Therefore, discourse critique of tafsir becomes essential in identifying the limits of conventional interpretations that may be exclusive, and in promoting the need for more inclusive, ethical, and context-conscious approaches to interpreting the Qur'an.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the notion that interpretations of Qur'anic verses cannot be detached from the surrounding social, political, and ideological contexts. Tafsir discourse is not solely the product of textual content and scientific methodology; it is also a site of meaning production influenced by power relations and institutional interests. This affirms the urgency of employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in tafsir studies to uncover ideological dimensions often hidden behind theological rhetoric. The study also opens a space for the development of a contextual tafsir theory, one that adopts ethical values—such as inclusivity, recognition of diversity, and social justice—as foundational principles in interpreting the sacred text.

Practically, these findings have direct implications for educational and religious development policies in Indonesia. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs and formal Islamic educational institutions must re-evaluate religious narratives found in textbooks and official state tafsir to avoid falling into majoritarian exclusivism that undermines intra-faith and interfaith diversity. Strengthening the spirit of Unity in Diversity must be accompanied by a commitment to fair representation of minority and marginalized groups. Therefore, educators, curriculum developers, and contemporary exegetes must cultivate interpretive approaches that are dialogical, empathetic, and grounded in the social realities of Indonesia's pluralistic society.

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