

Developing an Analytical Framework for the Reinterpretation of Religious Values Based on Islamic Theology and Human Rights

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ABSTRACT

This article critically analyzes the dynamics of the reinterpretation of religious values in Islam in the face of the universal Human Rights paradigm. The tension between the normativity of sacred texts and the demands of modernity underscores the need to deconstruct classical theological thought. This study aims to examine how fundamental values such as Tawhid, Justice, and Rahmatan lil 'alamin are reinterpreted within an inclusive humanistic framework. This study employs a literature review (library research) using hermeneutics, phenomenology, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). These approaches are utilized to understand the construction of meaning in religious texts as well as the surrounding social reality. The "Transformative Harmonization" framework was developed through a systematic synthesis of Islamic theological principles and contemporary human rights discourses, drawing on interpretive findings generated from hermeneutic, phenomenological, and CDA analyses. Its conceptual validity was established through triangulation across classical Islamic sources, contemporary scholarly literature, and critical examinations of socio-religious practices. The findings indicate that reinterpretation is a historical necessity to maintain Islam's relevance amid social change and the crisis of religious authority. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of a Theanthropological approach that connects the transcendental dimension with human reality through the concept of "Transformative Harmonization" between Islamic law and human rights. This study concludes that theological validity in the modern era is measured not only by ritual compliance but also by an ethical commitment to justice and the protection of the oppressed (mustad'afin).



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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religion and human rights in the modern world is often understood as one fraught with paradoxes and dialectical tensions (Assyfa Journal, 2023). On the one hand, religion is positioned as a source of noble moral values; on the other hand, certain religious interpretations are often used to legitimize structural injustice (MDPI, 2023). Although existing studies have extensively discussed the compatibility, tension, and negotiation between Islam and human rights, much of this scholarship remains general and normative, focusing primarily on whether Islamic teachings support or contradict universal human rights principles. Less attention has been given to how the reinterpretation of Islam's fundamental values can function as a concrete hermeneutical framework for resolving specific tensions between classical Islamic legal traditions and contemporary human rights standards.

The fundamental issue in this discourse lies in the question of whether a reinterpretation of Islam's fundamental values will undermine the purity of its teachings or, on the contrary, enrich spirituality through a deeper contextualization (Cambridge University Press, 2022). The classical fiqh tradition, which emerged within a specific historical context, often carries social constructs that are no longer fully aligned with modern standards of justice (Metro Islamic Law Review, 2023). This study therefore addresses a specific gap in the literature by examining not merely the abstract relationship between Islam and human rights, but the interpretive mechanism through which Islamic values can be recontextualized without abandoning their theological foundation.

In this context, a number of contemporary Muslim thinkers offer alternative approaches. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im proposes a deconstruction of Sharia based on universal values (An-Na'im, 2008), while Fazlur Rahman, through his "Double Movement" theory, emphasizes the importance of understanding historical context in interpreting texts (Rahman, 1982). On the other hand, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd views the Qur'an as a text that interacts with historical reality, distinguishing between textual meaning (ma'na) and contextual significance (maghza) (Abu Zayd, 1994). This approach opens the door to a more dynamic reinterpretation in response to contemporary social changes (Tribakti Journal, 2023). By bringing these interpretive approaches into dialogue, this article aims to demonstrate how contextual reinterpretation can offer a distinctive contribution to contemporary scholarship on Islam and human rights, particularly in bridging the gap between inherited legal formulations and evolving demands for justice, equality, and human dignity.

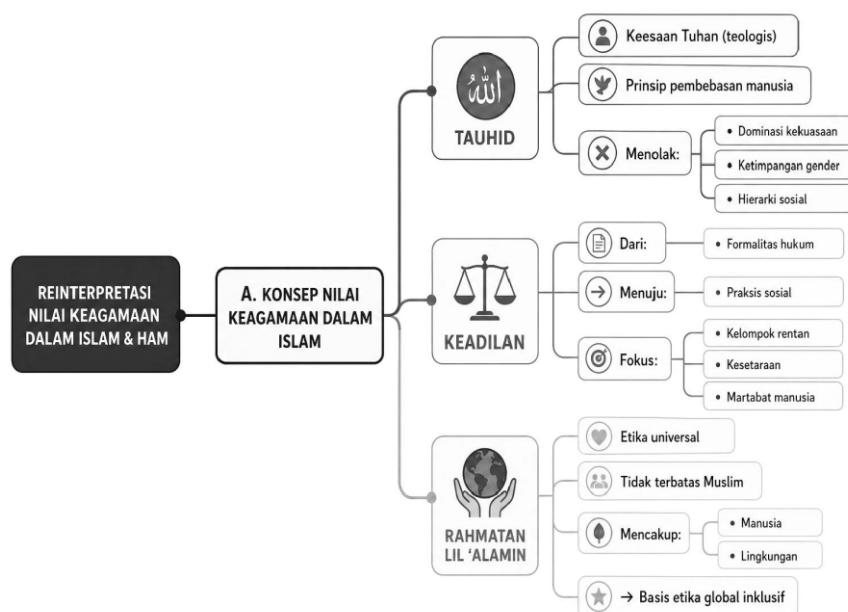
RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach based on library research, utilizing primary sources such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and the works of modern Islamic thinkers, as well as secondary sources such as academic journals and human rights reports (PMC, 2024). The source selection was conducted purposively by prioritizing texts that directly address the relationship between Islamic teachings, human dignity, justice, and human rights. Primary sources were selected based on their normative relevance, while secondary sources were chosen according to their academic credibility, publication relevance, and contribution to contemporary debates on Islam and human rights.

The analysis was conducted through three main approaches: hermeneutics to interpret religious texts contextually (Hamfara Journal, 2022), phenomenology to understand religious experience as a lived reality (Afkar Journal, 2023), and Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the relationship between religious discourse, power, and ideology (ResearchGate, 2023). The analytical criteria included textual relevance, contextual meaning, consistency with Islamic ethical principles, and the extent to which each source contributes to understanding the compatibility between Islamic discourse and universal human rights norms. To ensure data validity, the study applied source triangulation by comparing interpretations from primary Islamic texts, scholarly literature, and human rights documents. In addition, interpretive consistency was maintained by cross-checking key themes across different sources and avoiding reliance on a single textual or ideological perspective.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

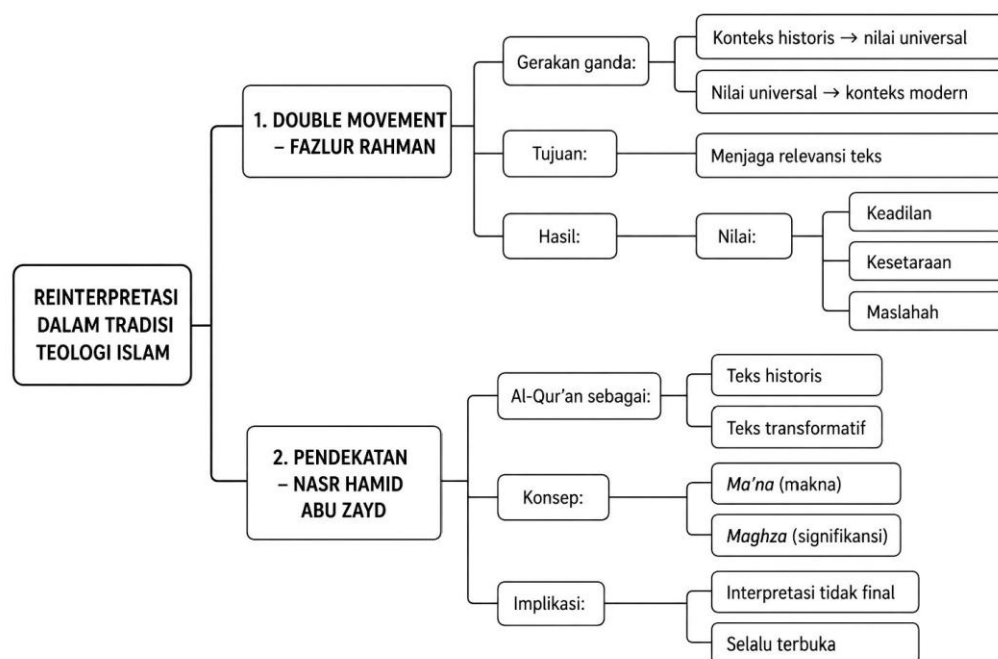
The Concept of Religious Values in Islam



Religious values in Islam are understood not only as a set of normative doctrines but also as an ethical framework that is alive within social reality. The concept of Tawhid, for example, is not merely interpreted as a theological acknowledgment of the oneness of God but also as a principle of liberation from all forms of human domination over others (Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2023). Within this framework, Tawhid carries social implications that reject unjust hierarchies, including those based on power, gender, and social class. This interpretation emerged from the analytical procedure by identifying Tawhid as a recurring theological category in the reviewed literature, then tracing how this category was linked to social consequences such as equality, anti-domination, and human dignity. Therefore, the finding is not presented only as a conceptual claim, but as the result of thematic interpretation across theological and socio-ethical sources.

Justice in Islam has also undergone a shift in meaning from mere compliance with formal law toward a social praxis that emphasizes advocacy for vulnerable groups (Kamali, 2019). This indicates that justice cannot be understood merely as normative legality but must be realized through concrete actions that guarantee equality and human dignity. Meanwhile, the concept of “Rahmatan lil ‘alamin” has evolved into a foundation for universal ethics that is not limited to the Muslim community alone but encompasses all of humanity and even the natural environment (RSIS Journal, 2022). Thus, religious values in Islam have the potential to serve as the basis for an inclusive global ethics. However, this potential should not be understood as automatic or uncontested. Conservative readings may argue that universal ethical claims risk weakening the particularity of Islamic law and doctrine. This study therefore treats inclusivity not as a replacement of Islamic normativity, but as a reinterpretative outcome grounded in the ethical purposes of Islamic teachings.

Reinterpretation in the Tradition of Islamic Theology



Fazlur Rahman’s Double Movement Method

The Double Movement approach developed by Fazlur Rahman emphasizes the importance of a two-way movement in understanding religious texts: from the historical context toward universal moral principles, and from those principles back to the contemporary context (SICOPUS Journal, 2024). This method allows religious texts to remain relevant without losing their normative substance. In this study, Rahman’s method was used as an analytical lens to distinguish between historically specific legal formulations and broader moral objectives. The analysis proceeded by examining how particular religious concepts were first situated in their original socio-historical context and then reconnected to contemporary human rights issues.

In practice, this approach encourages a critical reading of context-specific verses, so that universal values such as justice, equality, and the common good can be extracted and applied to modern realities. Thus, reinterpretation is not understood as a change in doctrine, but rather as an effort to actualize the Qur'an's moral message within an ever-changing context. Nevertheless, a limitation of this approach is that the movement from historical context to universal principle may be contested, especially by scholars who prioritize textual fixity over ethical reconstruction. This study acknowledges that such disagreement reflects a broader methodological debate within Islamic legal and theological thought.

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's Approach

Unlike Rahman, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd emphasizes that the Qur'an must be understood as a text that interacts with historical reality. He distinguishes between textual meaning (*ma'na*) and contextual significance (*maghza*), which opens the door to a more dynamic interpretation (Tribakti Journal, 2023). The relevance of Abu Zayd's approach in this study lies in its ability to explain how meanings are produced through interaction between text, interpreter, and social context. The analytical process therefore focused not only on what religious texts state, but also on how interpretive authority shapes the meaning of those texts in contemporary debates.

This approach positions the Qur'an not only as a revealed text but also as a text understood through historical and social processes. Thus, religious interpretation is not final but is always open to reinterpretation in accordance with the changing times and the needs of society. At the same time, this approach faces criticism from more traditional perspectives, which argue that emphasizing historicity may relativize divine revelation. This critique is important because it shows that reinterpretation must maintain a careful balance between contextual sensitivity and fidelity to transcendental values.

The Human Rights Perspective

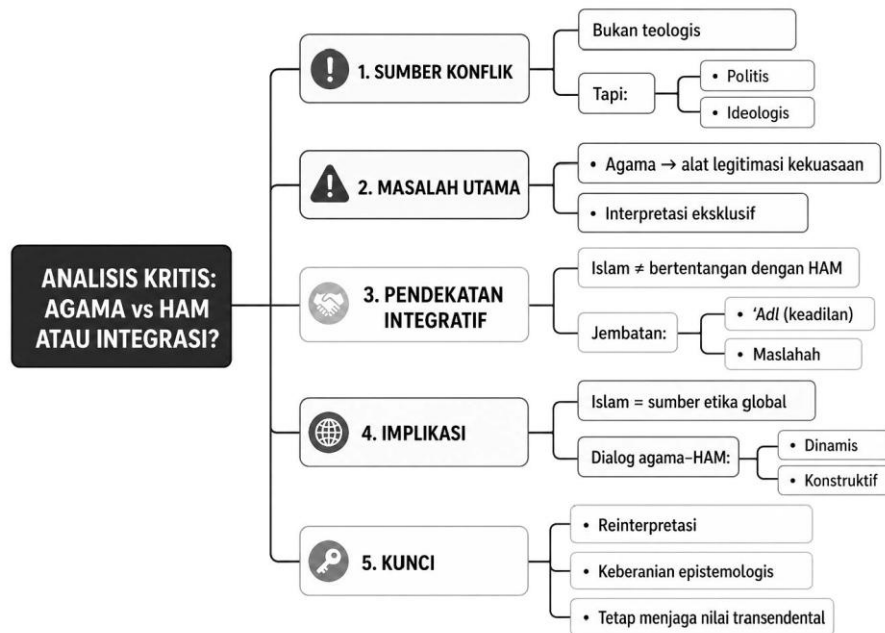


From a human rights perspective, freedom of religion is a fundamental right that must be guaranteed without coercion. This principle aligns with Islamic teachings, which emphasize the absence of coercion in religious practice, thereby allowing for more inclusive interpretations (MDPI, 2023). The finding was derived by comparing the normative language of human rights with Islamic ethical principles, particularly freedom, dignity, and justice. This comparison shows areas of convergence, while also revealing points of tension in legal and political implementation.

Furthermore, the issue of gender justice is a crucial point in the dialogue between Islam and human rights. Many practices in family law that have long been considered normative are, in fact, the

result of interpretations influenced by patriarchal structures (UN Women, 2026). Therefore, a reinterpretation is necessary to reaffirm the principles of justice and equality that lie at the core of Islamic teachings. However, this argument must be approached critically because not all gender-related legal traditions can be reduced simply to patriarchy. Some scholars maintain that classical family law reflects a coherent normative system based on social responsibility, complementarity, and communal stability. The reinterpetative approach proposed here does not dismiss these perspectives, but argues that any legal or theological formulation must be reassessed when it produces unequal dignity or restricts basic rights.

Critical Analysis: Religion vs. Human Rights, or Integration?



Tensions between Islam and human rights are often understood as a theological conflict, whereas in many cases they are more political and ideological in nature (MDPI, 2024). Religious discourse is frequently used as a tool to legitimize power, resulting in interpretations that tend to be exclusive and unresponsive to universal human values.

An integrative approach offers an alternative perspective by recognizing that human rights values are fundamentally not at odds with the core principles of Islam. The concepts of justice ('adl) and the public good (maslahah) can serve as a bridge connecting the two. With this approach, Islam is not positioned as opposed to human rights, but rather as a source of ethics that can enrich the global human rights discourse. Nevertheless, the integrative model has limitations. It may be criticized for selectively emphasizing ethical principles while underexplaining difficult legal tensions, such as inheritance, religious conversion, gender hierarchy, and minority rights. Therefore, integration should be understood as an ongoing hermeneutical project rather than a completed solution.

Furthermore, this integration requires epistemological courage to reinterpret texts and traditions without losing sight of transcendental values. Thus, the relationship between religion and human rights is no longer understood within a framework of conflict, but rather as a dynamic and constructive process of dialogue. The strength of this approach lies in its ability to move beyond descriptive comparison toward analytical reconstruction: it identifies the theological concepts used, explains how they were interpreted through selected methods, and evaluates their implications for contemporary human rights discourse. At the same time, its limitation lies in its dependence on textual and conceptual analysis, meaning that further empirical research is needed to examine how such reinterpretations are received by religious authorities, legal institutions, and Muslim communities in practice.

CONCLUSION

The reinterpretation of religious values in Islam is an inevitable historical necessity in the face of modern social dynamics. The tension between Islam and human rights is not inherent but rather the result of interpretations of religious texts that fail to take into account historical context and social change.

Through hermeneutics, phenomenology, and critical discourse analysis, this study demonstrates that fundamental Islamic values such as Tawhid, Justice, and Rahmatan lil 'alamin hold great potential for inclusive and contextual reinterpretation. This reinterpretation does not aim to alter the substance of the teachings but rather to actualize their universal values within contemporary reality.

The integration of Islam and human rights can be achieved through a *maslahah*-based approach that prioritizes human welfare as the primary objective of Sharia. Thus, religion is no longer positioned as a source of conflict, but as an ethical foundation capable of strengthening universal humanitarian principles. Practically, this finding offers a normative framework for religious scholars, educators, policymakers, and civil society actors to develop Islamic discourses and policies that are more responsive to issues of justice, equality, freedom, and human dignity. It also encourages religious institutions to promote contextual interpretation as part of public education, interreligious dialogue, and legal reform.

Therefore, the future of religious authority is largely determined by its ability to bridge transcendental values with concrete human needs, thereby creating a more just, inclusive, and civilized social order. Future research should further examine how *maslahah*-based reinterpretation is applied in specific socio-legal contexts, such as gender justice, minority rights, religious freedom, and citizenship. Comparative studies across Muslim-majority countries may also provide deeper insight into how Islamic values and human rights can be integrated in diverse political, cultural, and institutional settings.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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