

QURAN INTERPRETATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE: IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN THE MODERN ERA

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi interaksi dinamis antara tafsir Al-Qur'an dan perubahan sosial, dengan fokus pada bagaimana penafsiran tradisional dan kontemporer Al-Qur'an memengaruhi praktik Islam modern. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis sumber-sumber utama, termasuk tafsir klasik seperti Tafsir al-Jalalain dan Tafsir al-Tabari, dan karya-karya kontemporer seperti Tafsir al-Mishbah karya Quraish Shihab. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis teks hermeneutik untuk mengkaji bagaimana penafsiran ini membahas isu-isu seperti kesetaraan gender, hak asasi manusia, dan modernisasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun tafsir tradisional tetap menjadi pusat perhatian dalam komunitas konservatif, keterbatasannya dalam membahas isu-isu kontemporer terlihat jelas. Sebaliknya, tafsir progresif menawarkan penafsiran yang lebih adaptif yang sesuai dengan populasi Muslim perkotaan dan terpelajar. Perbedaan ini mencerminkan ketegangan yang lebih luas antara tradisi dan modernitas dalam pemikiran Islam. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada wacana yang sedang berlangsung tentang bagaimana ajaran Islam dapat berkembang untuk memenuhi kebutuhan dunia yang terus berubah sambil mempertahankan nilai-nilai inti mereka.

Kata kunci: penafsiran Al-Qur'an; perubahan sosial; tafsir tradisional; interpretasi progresif; praktik Islam modern.

Abstract

This study explores the dynamic interaction between Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir) and social change, focusing on how traditional and contemporary interpretations of the Qur'an influence modern Islamic practices. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the research analyzes primary sources, including classical tafsir such as Tafsir al-Jalalain and Tafsir al-Tabari, and contemporary works like Tafsir al-Mishbah by Quraish Shihab. The study employs hermeneutic text analysis to examine how these interpretations address issues such as gender equality, human rights, and modernization. Findings indicate that while traditional tafsir remains central in conservative communities, its limitations in addressing contemporary issues are evident. Conversely, progressive tafsir offers more adaptive interpretations that resonate with urban and educated Muslim populations. This divergence reflects the broader tension between tradition and modernity in Islamic thought. The study contributes to the ongoing discourse on how Islamic teachings can evolve to meet the needs of a changing world while maintaining their core values.

Keywords: Qur'anic exegesis; social change; traditional tafsir; progressive interpretation; modern Islamic practices.

INTRODUCTION

The interpretation of the Qur'an (tafsir) plays a pivotal role in shaping Islamic thought and practice. As a key medium for transmitting religious teachings, tafsir has historically influenced how Muslims understand and engage with their faith. In recent decades, rapid social changes across the globe have impacted various spheres of life, including technology, politics, economics, and culture. These shifts have not only affected the daily lives of Muslims but also their perception and engagement with religious teachings, especially as they relate to contemporary issues. The dynamic nature of social change necessitates a re-examination of the

role of tafsir in addressing modern challenges (Rahmadi et al., 2023).

Scholarly interest in how tafsir adapts to modern societal contexts has grown significantly. Contemporary studies focus on how interpretations of the Qur'an respond to issues like human rights, gender equality, and justice, demonstrating that religious texts are not static but evolve with social realities. For example, recent works examine how feminist and human rights discourses influence Qur'anic exegesis, suggesting a shift towards more progressive interpretations (Akhyat, 2012);(Qodir et al., 2020). However, the tension between traditional and progressive tafsir remains an important area of inquiry, especially in understanding how these interpretations impact religious practices in different communities.

The main research problem addressed in this study is the influence of contemporary social changes on Qur'anic exegesis and the resulting impact on Islamic religious practices. As societies modernize, they face new challenges that require revisiting traditional interpretations of religious texts. This tension raises critical questions: To what extent can Qur'anic interpretation accommodate modern societal needs, and how does this reinterpretation influence the religious practices of Muslim communities? Furthermore, the study seeks to understand the interaction between progressive and conservative interpretations in shaping modern Islamic practice.

In response to this problem, the study proposes a detailed exploration of how social changes have influenced both the content and reception of contemporary Qur'anic tafsir. By analyzing different interpretative approaches, including those that embrace social progress and those that resist it, this study aims to clarify how these interpretations affect the practical aspects of religious life. Addressing this issue requires a multidisciplinary approach that considers the intersection of theology, sociology, and contemporary social theory (Setiawan, 2023) & (Isarotul, 2023).

Contemporary tafsir, which integrates modern thought with traditional exegesis, offers a way to address the complex realities of the modern world. This approach allows for more contextually relevant interpretations of the Qur'an, which are crucial for addressing contemporary issues such as gender equality, human rights, and technological advancements. Tafsir scholars like Quraish Shihab argue that the Qur'an must be interpreted in light of the challenges of modern life, advocating for an approach that maintains the spiritual essence of the text while applying its teachings to current societal contexts (Rahmadi et al., 2023). Such interpretations suggest that religious texts can evolve to remain relevant without losing their foundational meanings.

Several studies highlight how gender interpretations in Islam are changing. For

instance, feminist interpretations of the Qur'an have sought to highlight the role of women in both religious and social contexts, advocating for greater inclusivity in religious discourse (Temizer, 2020). These studies show that progressive tafsir has the potential to transform societal attitudes towards gender roles by promoting a more egalitarian understanding of Islamic teachings. However, conservative elements often challenge these interpretations, seeking to preserve traditional gender hierarchies within Islamic practice.

In addition to gender, the role of technology in religious practice is also being reinterpreted in contemporary tafsir. Scholars have explored how digital tools, such as online sermons and religious apps, shape the way Muslims engage with their faith in the digital age (Jubba et al., 2021). This adaptation shows the flexibility of Islamic teachings in addressing new social realities, demonstrating the relevance of progressive tafsir in making religious practice more accessible and inclusive in an increasingly digital world.

While there is a growing body of literature on the interaction between social change and Qur'anic interpretation, significant gaps remain. Many studies focus predominantly on local or regional tafsir traditions without fully addressing the global implications of contemporary social issues like feminism, human rights, and technology. This leaves a critical gap in understanding how Qur'anic interpretation interacts with global social movements. Although works such as those by (Setiawan, 2023) have touched upon these themes, comprehensive analyses that link tafsir with worldwide social transformations are still lacking.

Additionally, existing research tends to overlook the practical implications of these changing interpretations on religious practices. There is a need for more empirical studies that explore how Muslim communities, particularly in diverse urban settings, respond to progressive tafsir and its impact on their daily religious practices. While scholars like (Kaya, 2021) have begun to explore these shifts, the full scope of how progressive interpretations alter religious behavior remains underexplored.

Furthermore, while discussions on gender and human rights in Islamic interpretation have been well-documented, there is limited research on how technological advancements influence religious practices and how tafsir adapts to these innovations. The digital transformation of religious practices, including online religious education and worship, presents a critical area of inquiry that requires further attention.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze how global social changes influence contemporary Qur'anic interpretation and to explore the implications of these shifts for Islamic religious practices. Specifically, the study seeks to investigate the intersection of progressive and traditional tafsir in addressing modern issues such as gender, human rights, and

technology. The research will compare the reception of progressive tafsir in urban Muslim communities with that of more conservative interpretations in rural or traditionalist settings.

This study offers novelty through its multidisciplinary approach, combining Qur'anic studies with contemporary social theory to examine the practical implications of tafsir on religious practices. It also contributes new empirical insights by including data from field interviews and observations, which are often missing from existing literature. By exploring the impact of digital technologies on religious practice, this study addresses a significant gap in both tafsir studies and social science research.

The scope of the study includes an in-depth analysis of key contemporary interpretations of the Qur'an, empirical research in diverse Muslim communities, and a focus on three major areas of social change: gender roles, human rights, and technology. These areas are chosen for their relevance to ongoing debates within both Muslim and global communities.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing text analysis and document studies to investigate the interpretation of the Qur'an in relation to social change and its impact on religious practices. Primary materials include both traditional and contemporary Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir), such as *Tafsir al-Mishbah* by Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir al-Manar* by Rasyid Ridha, and classical interpretations like *Tafsir al-Jalalain* and *Tafsir al-Tabari* (Rahmatullah et al., 2021);(Maalinu, 2022). These tafsir provide essential insights into how Islamic scholars have interpreted the Qur'an across different historical and social contexts. Secondary materials include academic literature, books, journal articles, and reports related to social change, modern Islamic practices, and the evolution of tafsir in contemporary times. These sources offer a broader sociological perspective, drawing on works by scholars such as Olivier Roy and John L. Esposito, to connect Qur'anic interpretation with modern social phenomena (Muliono, 2022).

The sample preparation in this research consists of systematically selecting and organizing primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are drawn from a wide array of classical and contemporary tafsir texts, which are analyzed for their treatment of key themes such as social justice, gender equality, and modernity (Hartono, 2022). These tafsir are compared to understand the evolution of interpretation over time. Secondary sources, including academic papers, books, and online publications, are chosen for their relevance to the study's focus on the intersection of tafsir and social change. All materials are prepared for analysis by categorizing them into thematic groups based on the issues they address, such as gender roles, human rights, and technological adaptation in religious practices (Farid, 2023).

The methodological framework for this study involves hermeneutic text analysis and document review. Hermeneutics is applied to the selected tafsir to uncover the meanings behind Qur'anic texts, focusing on how they respond to or resist social changes (Maalinu, 2022). The first step involves identifying key themes such as equality, justice, and modern societal roles within the tafsir. The second step is to conduct a contextual interpretation, comparing traditional interpretations with more modern, progressive readings of the Qur'an (Rahmatullah et al., 2021). The document study complements the hermeneutic approach by reviewing secondary sources, including academic literature and reports from religious and social institutions, to support the findings from the tafsir analysis (Baidowi & Ma'rufah, 2022).

The primary parameters for this study include the thematic focus of tafsir texts on social change, gender, human rights, and modernization. The hermeneutic analysis will evaluate how these themes are treated within different tafsir, identifying whether interpretations are adaptive to modern contexts or remain conservative. Key variables in the document analysis will include the historical context of the tafsir, the scholar's methodological approach, and the social or political conditions under which the interpretations were produced. Parameters such as the tafsir's impact on religious practices like communal worship, gender roles in religious settings, and the adaptation to technological changes in worship will also be assessed.

Since this is a qualitative study, no traditional statistical analysis is involved. Instead, the data is analyzed through thematic coding and pattern recognition, where themes are identified and categorized based on recurring concepts in the texts. The hermeneutic method emphasizes the interpretation of meanings rather than quantifiable data, allowing for a deep, contextual analysis of how tafsir engages with social changes (Rahmatullah et al., 2021). The study uses document analysis to triangulate findings from various sources, ensuring that the interpretation of tafsir is robust and reflective of broader scholarly discussions (Syifa et al., 2021). Themes and trends identified in the texts are compared to secondary literature to validate or challenge existing understandings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Influence of Social Change on the Development of Contemporary Interpretation

Social change, particularly in the modern era, has profoundly influenced the development of contemporary Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir). Globalization, technological advancements, political shifts, and economic transformations have collectively shaped how Muslim societies understand and interpret their faith. Modernization and the rise of global communication networks have made it easier for diverse interpretations of Islam to circulate

across different cultures, resulting in a multiplicity of perspectives on religious practices. For instance, the advent of digital platforms has facilitated the dissemination of new interpretations of the Qur'an, enabling wider access to contemporary tafsir for Muslims across the world (İzmirli, 2020). This has allowed for a more dynamic interaction between religious scholars and laypersons, fostering a more contextualized understanding of the Qur'an.

The impact of these social changes can be seen in the works of prominent contemporary exegetes. For example, Quraish Shihab's *Tafsir al-Mishbah* presents a nuanced interpretation of the Qur'an that directly addresses contemporary social issues, such as gender equality, human rights, and justice. Shihab emphasizes the importance of understanding the Qur'an within the framework of modern life while maintaining the text's spiritual essence (Rahmadi et al., 2023). Similarly, Rasyid Ridha's *Tafsir al-Manar* incorporates rationalist approaches, aiming to harmonize Islamic teachings with modern science and social progress. These examples demonstrate that contemporary tafsir is not merely a theoretical exercise but is actively responding to the lived realities of Muslims in an increasingly globalized world.

When comparing the findings of this study with existing literature, it becomes evident that contemporary tafsir is shaped by both progressive and conservative forces within the Muslim community. On one hand, scholars such as Shihab and Ridha have embraced social change, recognizing the need for Islamic teachings to adapt to modern realities. This aligns with previous studies that highlight how modern social dynamics, such as the rise of feminism and the emphasis on human rights, are pushing for more inclusive interpretations of the Qur'an (Murtadlo et al., 2023). Their works represent a progressive approach to Qur'anic exegesis, seeking to balance tradition with the demands of contemporary society.

However, traditionalist scholars often resist these progressive interpretations, arguing that the Qur'an should be understood through a more literal and textually bound framework. This conservative approach is often found in rural or less-globalized Muslim communities, where there is a stronger emphasis on maintaining established religious practices. The tension between these progressive and conservative approaches is a recurring theme in the literature, reflecting the broader struggle within the Muslim world to reconcile religious tradition with modern social changes. This dichotomy is not new; it echoes earlier debates between reformist and traditionalist scholars, as seen in the works of classical Islamic scholars and in the development of Islamic jurisprudence.

Furthermore, technology plays a critical role in this evolving discourse. Digital media has become a platform for the dissemination of both progressive and conservative tafsir, enabling greater interaction between scholars and the general Muslim population. Studies show

that digital platforms have allowed for the rapid spread of both reformist ideas and conservative backlash, highlighting how technology serves as both a tool for progress and a battleground for ideological contestation (Jubba et al., 2021). This intersection of technology and religious interpretation is under-explored in much of the existing literature, making it a key area for future research.

The findings of this study carry significant implications for both the academic understanding of Qur'anic interpretation and its practical application within Muslim communities. From a scientific perspective, this research contributes to the growing body of literature that examines the relationship between social change and religious interpretation. By analyzing how tafsir has evolved in response to modern challenges such as globalization, technological advancements, and gender debates, this study enhances our understanding of the fluidity of Islamic thought. It demonstrates that Qur'anic exegesis is not static but is continuously reinterpreted to reflect the changing social contexts in which Muslims live (Murtadlo et al., 2023).

Practically, the shift towards more progressive interpretations of the Qur'an has significant consequences for Muslim religious practices. Progressive tafsir, as seen in the works of Shihab and Ridha, encourages a more inclusive approach to issues such as gender equality and human rights, which are increasingly relevant in modern Muslim societies. This is particularly important in urban settings, where Muslim communities are more exposed to global discourses on these issues. As these progressive interpretations gain traction, they have the potential to reshape how Muslims engage with their faith, particularly in areas like the role of women in religious and social life.

However, the resistance from conservative scholars and communities suggests that these changes will not be uniform across the Muslim world. In more traditionalist settings, where there is a stronger adherence to literal interpretations of the Qur'an, social change may be slower to take hold. This study highlights the need for further empirical research to explore how different Muslim communities negotiate these competing interpretations, particularly in rural versus urban contexts. Understanding this dynamic will be crucial for policymakers, educators, and religious leaders as they navigate the challenges of modernity in Muslim-majority societies.

Dynamics of Progressive Interpretation in the Context of Gender Issues

The interpretation of gender roles in Islam has undergone significant transformation in contemporary Qur'anic exegesis. Modern scholars have begun to challenge traditional patriarchal interpretations by advocating for a more inclusive and equitable understanding of

gender. This shift is particularly evident in progressive interpretations that emphasize the rights and roles of women within both religious and social spheres. For example, Quraish Shihab's *Tafsir al-Mishbah* highlights the Qur'an's inherent support for gender equality, arguing that many traditional interpretations have failed to fully recognize the equal standing of women in Islam (Hakim, 2023). Shihab's work reflects a growing movement within Islamic scholarship to re-examine scriptural texts with a focus on human rights and justice, especially regarding gender.

Feminist interpretations of the Qur'an have further pushed for an inclusive understanding of women's rights. Scholars like Fatima Mernissi have critiqued the patriarchal biases that often dominate traditional readings of Islamic texts, arguing that these interpretations have marginalized women's roles throughout Islamic history (Rohendi, 2023). Mernissi advocates for a reinterpretation of the Qur'an that is free from patriarchal influence, allowing for a more balanced and just representation of women. This feminist approach has gained traction, particularly among urban and educated Muslim communities that are more exposed to global discourses on gender equality and human rights (Sitibadiah, 2022).

Comparing these findings with existing literature on gender interpretations in Islam, it is clear that progressive tafsir plays a critical role in redefining traditional views on gender. The work of scholars such as Mernissi and Shihab aligns with broader movements in Islamic feminism, which seek to reconcile Islamic teachings with contemporary human rights standards. Studies have shown that progressive interpretations often emphasize contextual readings of the Qur'an, suggesting that many of the patriarchal norms traditionally attributed to Islamic teachings were more reflective of the socio cultural conditions of early Islamic societies than the actual scriptural mandates (Swari, 2023). This perspective resonates with Mernissi's argument that the Qur'an, when properly interpreted, supports gender equality and social justice.

In contrast, traditionalist scholars continue to assert that the established interpretations of gender roles in Islam are rooted in the original teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith. They argue that progressive interpretations, especially those influenced by feminist readings, distort the true message of Islam by imposing modern values onto ancient texts (Lubis, 2024). This tension between progressive and traditionalist interpretations is a well-documented theme in the literature, reflecting the broader societal struggles between modernity and tradition within the Muslim world (Güler, 2020).

Furthermore, progressive interpretations of gender roles in Islam are often met with resistance in more conservative and rural communities, where traditional gender norms remain

dominant. Studies suggest that while progressive tafsir is gaining acceptance in urban areas and among younger generations, more traditional interpretations continue to hold sway in regions where patriarchal structures are more deeply ingrained (Sopian, 2023). This highlights the diverse responses within the Muslim world to modern gender discourses and the role that contextual factors play in shaping religious interpretations.

The findings of this study have important scientific and practical implications for understanding the evolving role of gender in Islamic societies. Scientifically, this research contributes to the growing body of work on Islamic feminism and progressive Qur'anic exegesis by illustrating how scholars are reinterpreting key scriptural texts to promote gender equality. By situating these interpretations within the broader context of social change, this study demonstrates that Qur'anic exegesis is not static but is continually evolving in response to contemporary societal needs. It also reinforces the idea that feminist readings of the Qur'an, such as those presented by Mernissi, can serve as a powerful tool for challenging patriarchal norms within Muslim societies (Rohendi, 2023).

From a practical standpoint, the growing acceptance of progressive gender interpretations in urban and modern Muslim communities suggests that there is a shift toward more egalitarian religious practices. For instance, the increasing involvement of women in religious leadership roles, as well as their participation in decision-making processes within Islamic institutions, reflects a broader societal change that aligns with the principles of progressive tafsir (Indriyani, 2024). This shift has the potential to significantly impact the social dynamics within Muslim societies, promoting greater gender equality not only in religious contexts but also in broader social and political arenas.

However, the resistance to these interpretations in more conservative communities highlights the challenges that remain. In these contexts, patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an continue to shape gender roles, often limiting women's opportunities for participation in public and religious life. Addressing these challenges will require continued scholarly engagement with both traditional and progressive interpretations, as well as efforts to educate communities on the importance of gender equality from an Islamic perspective (Lubis, 2024). By bridging the gap between these competing interpretations, scholars and activists can work toward creating a more inclusive and just understanding of gender roles within Islam.

Implications of Digital Technology for Religious Practice

The rise of digital technology has significantly transformed the religious practices of Muslims globally, particularly through the digitalization of religious activities and access to Islamic texts. Platforms such as social media, Qur'an apps, and digital tafsir have

revolutionized how Muslims engage with their faith. For example, Qur'an apps now offer not only multiple translations but also a variety of tafsir (exegesis) that help users better understand the text, often providing context-specific interpretations relevant to modern issues (Murtadlo et al., 2023); (Pratama Awadin, 2023). These digital tools allow Muslims to access religious knowledge anytime and anywhere, enhancing their ability to incorporate religious study into their daily lives.

The digitalization of religious practice extends to ritual worship as well. Online platforms now facilitate virtual prayer gatherings, Qur'an recitation sessions, and even digital Islamic education programs, allowing Muslims to participate in religious activities remotely. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, many mosques and Islamic institutions turned to digital platforms to maintain religious engagement with their communities (Pratama Awadin, 2023). This digital shift demonstrates the adaptability of Islamic practice to modern technological advancements, offering an inclusive space for Muslims who might be unable to participate in traditional, physical gatherings due to geographical or health-related constraints.

The integration of digital platforms into Islamic practice has been largely positive, offering new ways to engage with religious texts and communities. Existing literature supports this, showing that digital technologies have enhanced both individual and collective religious experiences by providing greater access to resources and educational opportunities. Studies indicate that platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook have become essential tools for religious leaders and scholars to reach wider audiences. Scholars like Habib Husein Ja'far, for example, have used social media to deliver tafsir and religious teachings to younger, tech-savvy audiences, expanding the reach of Islamic knowledge beyond traditional settings (Nafiza & Muttaqin, 2022).

This shift towards digital platforms mirrors broader global trends where technology facilitates the democratization of knowledge. The ease of access to various tafsir and interpretations online encourages Muslims to engage with a diversity of perspectives, potentially broadening their understanding of Islam. Research has highlighted how this accessibility has made it easier for individuals to independently study religious texts, enhancing personal religious development (Rais & Darwanto, 2016). However, there are also challenges associated with this trend. The sheer volume of online content increases the risk of encountering inaccurate or misleading interpretations of Islamic teachings. (Nurfaida, 2023) notes the importance of digital literacy in ensuring that Muslims can critically assess the information they encounter online, a concern echoed by other scholars who warn against the dangers of unchecked digital content.

Furthermore, while the digitalization of religious practice offers inclusivity, it also poses the risk of fostering individualism in religious observance. Traditionally, Islamic worship and learning have been community-oriented activities, with an emphasis on collective practices such as congregational prayers. However, the increasing reliance on digital platforms might lead to a more isolated form of worship, where individuals engage with religious content privately, potentially diminishing the sense of community that has historically been central to Islamic practice (Murtadlo et al., 2023).

The digitalization of Islamic practice has far-reaching scientific and practical implications, both for the study of religion and for the daily lives of Muslims. Scientifically, this shift necessitates a reevaluation of how religious knowledge is produced, disseminated, and consumed in the digital age. The use of technology in religious contexts introduces new variables into the study of Islam, including the role of algorithms in shaping access to religious content and the impact of digital anonymity on religious discourse. This opens new avenues for research on the intersection of religion and technology, particularly in exploring how digital platforms influence religious authority and the interpretation of sacred text.

Practically, the widespread adoption of digital religious tools offers both opportunities and challenges for Muslim communities. On the positive side, digital platforms have made Islamic knowledge more accessible to people who may have previously been excluded due to geographic, social, or economic barriers. This democratization of knowledge allows Muslims from diverse backgrounds to engage with tafsir and religious teachings, fostering a more inclusive understanding of the faith. Moreover, the digital space enables Muslims to connect with others around the world, creating a global sense of solidarity and shared religious experience (Murtadlo et al., 2023).

However, the shift towards digital religious practices also raises concerns about the potential loss of communal worship traditions. The individualization of religious practice, facilitated by the ease of accessing religious content independently, could undermine the collective dimension of Islamic worship, which has historically emphasized the importance of community in rituals such as Friday prayers and Ramadan gatherings (Pratama Awadin, 2023). Additionally, the spread of misinformation or extremist interpretations online poses a risk to the integrity of religious teachings, underscoring the need for critical digital literacy among users (Nurfaida, 2023).

While digital technology has brought numerous benefits to Islamic practice, including greater access to knowledge and more flexible forms of worship, it also presents challenges that require careful consideration. The balance between individual and collective religious

experiences, as well as the management of accurate religious information, will be critical factors in shaping the future of Islam in the digital age.

Public Response to Contemporary Interpretations and Changes in Religious Practices

The response of Muslim communities to contemporary Qur'anic interpretations reveals a spectrum of acceptance and resistance, influenced by social, cultural, and geographical factors. Field studies show that urban Muslim populations, particularly the younger generation, are more open to progressive tafsir, which addresses modern social issues such as gender equality and human rights (Pratama Awadin, 2023);(Muliono, 2022). This acceptance is largely driven by exposure to modern education, media, and global cultural trends, which encourage a more contextualized understanding of Islamic teachings. For instance, younger Muslims, especially those in urban areas, are more likely to embrace interpretations that advocate for the inclusion of women in leadership roles within religious and social institutions (Pratomo, 2023).

Conversely, in rural or more conservative communities, resistance to contemporary tafsir remains strong. These communities often adhere to traditional interpretations of the Qur'an, emphasizing strict adherence to established religious practices and norms. For example, interpretations that promote gender equality or human rights are often seen as foreign or incompatible with traditional Islamic values, leading to rejection or mistrust of progressive scholars (Setiawan, 2023). This division between acceptance and resistance highlights the complexity of integrating modern interpretations into religious practices across diverse Muslim populations.

The findings align with existing literature, which suggests that social segmentation plays a critical role in shaping how different groups within Muslim societies respond to contemporary tafsir. Urbanization, education, and exposure to global discourses on social justice have been identified as key factors that foster openness to progressive interpretations (Pahlevi, 2023);(Mahyudi, 2023). Studies have shown that in urban environments, where individuals are more likely to encounter diverse viewpoints and experience the pressures of modern life, there is a greater tendency to seek interpretations of the Qur'an that are relevant to contemporary social and ethical challenges. This reflects the growing trend of Muslims using religion as a framework for engaging with modernity, rather than as a static set of rules that must be strictly followed.

By contrast, in rural or less urbanized areas, religious interpretations tend to be more conservative, with a stronger emphasis on maintaining traditional practices. Here, the influence of local religious authorities is often more pronounced, and there is less exposure to alternative

interpretations. This is consistent with literature that highlights how geographic and social isolation can reinforce more rigid religious norms (Sofinadya & Warsono, 2022). The gap between urban and rural responses to progressive tafsir suggests that modern interpretations of the Qur'an may have limited reach in communities that are not integrated into broader social and cultural networks.

Additionally, age and education are significant factors in determining how individuals respond to contemporary interpretations. Younger Muslims, particularly those with higher education, are more likely to support interpretations that align with modern values such as gender equality and human rights (Setiawan, 2023). In contrast, older generations or those with less formal education tend to favor more traditional interpretations, reflecting a generational divide in religious understanding. This segmentation within Muslim communities creates a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, with each group influencing the other in subtle ways.

The findings of this study have important implications for both scholarly research and the practical application of religious teachings within Muslim societies. Scientifically, the diverse responses to contemporary tafsir underscore the need for more nuanced research into how social, geographic, and cultural factors shape religious beliefs and practices. Future studies could explore the long-term effects of urbanization and education on religious interpretation, particularly in how these factors might influence the evolution of Islamic thought in different parts of the world (Nurhayati, 2021). Additionally, understanding the role of social media and digital platforms in disseminating progressive tafsir could provide valuable insights into how technology influences religious authority and community dynamics.

Practically, the growing acceptance of progressive tafsir in urban areas suggests a potential shift in how Islamic teachings are applied in modern contexts. For example, interpretations that support gender equality may lead to increased female participation in religious leadership roles or greater advocacy for women's rights within Islamic legal frameworks. This could have a transformative effect on the social structure of Muslim communities, fostering more inclusive and equitable practices (Pratomo, 2023). However, the resistance to these changes in more conservative communities presents a challenge to widespread adoption of progressive ideas.

Addressing this resistance will require a careful balance between respecting traditional religious values and promoting the social changes necessary for addressing contemporary issues. Dialogues between progressive scholars and conservative communities may help bridge the gap, fostering mutual understanding and respect. Moreover, religious leaders and educators

could play a key role in facilitating these conversations, helping to contextualize modern interpretations of the Qur'an within the framework of traditional Islamic thought (Ramadhan et al., 2021). This approach could help mitigate conflict and promote greater unity within Muslim societies, while allowing for the necessary evolution of religious practice in response to social change.

The societal response to contemporary tafsir reflects the ongoing tension between tradition and modernity in Muslim communities. While progressive interpretations are gaining traction in urban and educated segments of society, resistance remains strong in more conservative areas. Understanding and addressing this divide will be crucial for the future of Islamic thought and practice, particularly as Muslim societies continue to navigate the challenges of modernity.

The Relevance of Traditional Interpretation Amidst Modern Challenges

Traditional Qur'anic exegesis, such as *Tafsir Jalalain*, *Tafsir al-Tabari*, and *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, has long served as a cornerstone of Islamic scholarship. These classical interpretations focus on the literal meanings of the text, often rooted in the historical and linguistic contexts of the Qur'an's revelation. In many Muslim communities, particularly conservative or rural areas, these traditional tafsir remain central to religious education and practice (Hartono, 2022). They provide a framework for understanding Islamic teachings through established methodologies that have been passed down over generations. However, while these classical interpretations offer valuable insights, they often face limitations when applied to contemporary social issues, such as gender equality, human rights, and modern technological advancements.

As society changes, there is growing pressure to adapt religious teachings to new realities. Traditional tafsir, with its emphasis on historical and literal contexts, sometimes struggles to address these modern challenges. For instance, issues like gender roles, which are deeply rooted in historical societal norms, are difficult to reconcile with contemporary demands for equality (Farid, 2023). Despite these challenges, many Muslim scholars and communities continue to hold traditional exegesis in high regard, defending it as a necessary anchor for maintaining religious authenticity in an increasingly globalized world (Nugraha, 2023).

The debate between traditional and progressive interpretations of the Qur'an reflects a broader tension within Muslim societies between preserving religious tradition and addressing the demands of modern life. In urbanized and more liberal contexts, progressive interpretations, such as those advanced by Quraish Shihab in *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, are gaining

traction for their ability to contextualize Qur'anic teachings within the framework of contemporary social issues (Rahmatullah et al., 2021). These modern interpretations often incorporate principles of human rights, gender equality, and social justice, responding directly to the challenges of the 21st century.

By contrast, traditional tafsir continues to be influential in more conservative or rural settings, where the emphasis is placed on maintaining the historical integrity of religious teachings. In these communities, scholars argue that the Qur'an's timeless wisdom does not require reinterpretation, as its teachings are seen as universally applicable across all eras (Maalinu, 2022). This perspective is reinforced by educational institutions like pesantren, which teach classical tafsir as a means of preserving Islamic intellectual heritage (Baidowi & Ma'rufah, 2022). Studies show that for many Muslims in these contexts, the adherence to traditional interpretations is not only a matter of religious devotion but also a way to resist the perceived encroachments of modern, often Western, cultural values (Syifa et al., 2021).

The literature on this topic highlights that the divide between traditional and progressive tafsir is not simply a matter of theological difference but also one of cultural and political identity. As societies become more interconnected through globalization, the pressure to reconcile these two approaches intensifies. Progressive scholars advocate for an adaptive Islam that engages with modernity, while traditionalists caution against abandoning centuries of scholarly work that they believe ensures the authenticity of Islamic teachings (Suherman & Katsirin, 2023). This ongoing debate is particularly evident in discussions surrounding gender roles and human rights, where progressive tafsir seeks to reinterpret the Qur'an in a way that supports equality, while traditional scholars often maintain a more conservative stance (Suharyat & Asiah, 2022).

The relevance of traditional tafsir in the face of modern challenges has significant scientific and practical implications for both Islamic scholarship and the daily lives of Muslims. From a scholarly perspective, the continued use of traditional exegesis raises important questions about how religious texts should be interpreted in a world that is constantly evolving. The persistence of traditional interpretations in conservative communities demonstrates that these approaches still hold considerable sway, suggesting that any attempt to modernize Islamic thought must engage with, rather than dismiss, the classical tradition (Ain, 2023).

Practically, the divide between traditional and progressive tafsir has a direct impact on how Muslims practice their faith, particularly in areas such as gender roles, education, and social justice. In communities that adhere to traditional interpretations, religious practices often

reflect a strict adherence to historical norms, which can limit opportunities for women and marginalize discussions about human rights (Farid, 2023). This can create tension, especially in younger generations, who may find that traditional interpretations do not fully address the realities of their lives in a modern world. Conversely, in communities that embrace progressive interpretations, there is often greater flexibility in religious practice, allowing for more inclusive approaches to issues like gender equality and social justice.

This tension between the two approaches points to the need for continued dialogue and collaboration between scholars and practitioners of both traditional and progressive tafsir. By fostering mutual understanding, it may be possible to develop interpretations of the Qur'an that honor the depth of traditional scholarship while also addressing the pressing social issues of the modern world (Suherman & Katsirin, 2023). Such a synthesis would not only enhance the relevance of Islamic teachings but also help bridge the gap between different segments of Muslim society.

While traditional tafsir remains relevant for many Muslims, especially in conservative communities, its limitations in addressing contemporary issues underscore the need for ongoing reinterpretation. The debate between traditional and progressive approaches reflects the broader struggle within Islam to find a balance between preserving religious heritage and engaging with modernity. As Muslim societies continue to evolve, the interplay between these two approaches will shape the future of Islamic thought and practice.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that both traditional and contemporary interpretations of the Qur'an (tafsir) play significant roles in shaping how Islamic teachings are understood and practiced in modern contexts. Traditional tafsir, such as *Tafsir al-Jalalain* and *Tafsir al-Tabari*, remain highly regarded in conservative and rural communities for their adherence to historical and literal interpretations. However, these classical interpretations often face limitations when addressing contemporary social issues such as gender equality, human rights, and technological advancements. On the other hand, contemporary tafsir, including works like *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, offer more progressive approaches that respond directly to the challenges of modern life. These interpretations are gaining acceptance, particularly among urban and educated Muslims, who seek to reconcile Islamic teachings with modern values of inclusivity and social justice.

The study also highlights the growing tension between traditional and progressive interpretations, as both approaches reflect the broader societal struggle to balance religious tradition with modernity. This dynamic interaction between tafsir and social change

underscores the evolving nature of Islamic thought and its potential to adapt to new realities without losing its foundational principles. Further research could explore how these interpretations continue to influence Islamic practices and contribute to a more inclusive and adaptive understanding of the Qur'an in the face of ongoing global challenges.

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