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Reinterpreting pluralism: A critical exegetical and intellectual analysis in contemporary Islamic thought

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ABSTRACT

In the face of intensifying currents of globalization and increasingly complex human interactions, the issue of pluralism has emerged as one of the most significant challenges in contemporary Islamic thought. This phenomenon is not confined to the theological realm but extends into social, cultural, and political dimensions that comprehensively impact the Muslim community. The diversity of interpretations of Qur'anic verses related to pluralism has given rise to a broad spectrum of understandings, reflecting both the intellectual richness and the complexity of the challenges faced by modern Muslims. This research aims to conduct an in-depth study of the concept of pluralism from the perspective of Qur'anic exegesis and the thought of contemporary Muslim scholars, with a focus on the discourse developing within the Indonesian context. By analyzing diverse interpretations, examining the views of proponents and critics, and exploring contextually relevant models of pluralism, this study seeks to build a strong theoretical foundation and offer practical contributions. The expected contributions include the development of a more dynamic and inclusive Islamic thought, the enhancement of interreligious harmony, and the provision of data-driven policy recommendations to assist stakeholders in supporting a pluralistic and just society.

KEYWORDS: pluralism, Qur'anic exegesis, contemporary Islamic thought, Indonesia, interreligious harmony

Introduction

Amidst the intensifying currents of globalization and increasingly complex human interactions, pluralism has emerged as one of the most challenging issues in contemporary Islamic thought. This phenomenon extends beyond theological dimensions, permeating social, cultural, and political spheres that comprehensively impact the Muslim community. Diverse interpretations of Qur'anic verses concerning pluralism have given rise to a broad spectrum of understandings, reflecting both intellectual richness and the complexity of challenges faced by modern Muslims. Global developments and intensified interfaith interactions have prompted profound scholarly examinations of pluralism, seeking to address contemporary needs without compromising fundamental Islamic principles. The evolving comprehension of pluralism continues to develop in tandem with shifting global socio-political landscapes, which shape Muslim perspectives toward "the other." The prominence of pluralism has elicited varied responses from Muslim scholars and intellectuals, generating an intellectual dialectic that enriches the Islamic intellectual heritage (Munawar-Rachman, 2010, pp. 15–28)

The historical experience of the Muslim community in managing diversity since the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) offers valuable insights into Islam's perspective and approach to plurality. The Constitution of Medina, as a historical document embodying the Islamic ethos of managing diversity, serves as a pivotal reference for understanding Islam's stance toward pluralism. Dynamic interactions between Islam and diverse civilizations and traditions throughout history have yielded cultural syntheses that enrich the comprehension of pluralism within an Islamic context. The rich classical Islamic intellectual heritage featuring multifaceted approaches to interpreting texts and realities provides a robust foundation for developing contemporary thought on pluralism. Intensive dialogue between Islam and various intellectual traditions has generated a wealth of perspectives on pluralism. Empirical experiences of Muslims across socio-cultural contexts demonstrate Islam's flexibility in engaging with diversity (M. A. Abdullah, 2020, pp. 133–156).

Indonesia, with its extraordinary religious and cultural diversity, provides a living laboratory for advancing the understanding of pluralism in Islam. Indonesian Muslim thinkers have made significant contributions by developing original pluralism frameworks rooted in local contexts yet possessing universal relevance. Emerging challenges of radicalism and intolerance across various regions have stimulated critical studies on pluralism that seek solutions grounded in Islamic values. Indonesia's efforts to foster interreligious harmony have yielded dialogical and collaborative models offering potential inspiration for global contexts. Indonesian Muslim intellectuals' contributions to pluralism discourse have enriched global perspectives on how Islam can serve as a positive force in building harmonious societies (Abas, 2018, pp. 45–66).

The digital era has introduced a new dimension to the discourse on pluralism by creating unprecedented virtual dialogue spaces. Digital interactions among religious communities have opened up novel opportunities as well as challenges in fostering mutual understanding. The phenomena of post-truth and online radicalization necessitate the development of new approaches for comprehending and promoting pluralism. Social media has become a significant arena shaping perceptions and attitudes towards pluralism, demanding prudent engagement. The urgency of cultivating digital literacy within the context of pluralism grows increasingly critical alongside the rising influence of social media in religious life. Interfaith dialogue in the digital age requires approaches that are adaptive to the characteristics of new media (Burhani, 2019, pp. 78–95).

Religiously nuanced conflicts occurring across various regions of the world have provided valuable lessons on the importance of constructing an appropriate understanding of pluralism within Islam. The experiences of diverse nations in managing religious diversity present invaluable case studies for understanding the dynamics of interreligious relations in the modern context. In-depth analysis of the roots of conflict and resolution efforts yields critical insights into how pluralism can serve as an instrument for peace. Religion's role in both conflict and reconciliation underscores the necessity of developing a sound understanding of pluralism grounded in spiritual values. Various peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives involving religious communities have demonstrated the efficacy of pluralism-based approaches in conflict resolution. Lessons drawn from diverse cases of religious conflict can enrich our comprehension of the practical implementation of pluralism in challenging contexts. These experiences affirm that pluralism is not merely a theoretical concept, but a practical necessity for building peace (Bagir, 2013, pp. 104–122).

The development of contemporary religious studies methodologies has unveiled new perspectives for comprehending pluralism in a more comprehensive and profound manner. Phenomenological and hermeneutical

approaches within religious studies have enriched perspectives on religious diversity by providing more sophisticated analytical tools. Anthropological studies of religion have helped reveal grassroots-level pluralism dynamics that often elude macro-level analyses. Contemporary sociological studies of religion have enhanced our understanding of the social dimensions of pluralism and their implications for communal life. The evolution of religious studies as an academic discipline has opened new avenues for understanding the complexity of religious pluralism. Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of pluralism have enabled more comprehensive analyses of religious diversity phenomena. Refined research methodologies now facilitate deeper understanding of pluralism dynamics across diverse contexts (Ghazali, 2009, pp. 34–56).

The emergence of transnational movements has presented both new challenges and opportunities within Islamic pluralism discourse. Transnational ideologies tending toward exclusivity have compelled Muslim thinkers to develop more articulate responses regarding Islam's position on pluralism. The global-local dynamics within religious movements have generated novel complexities in understanding and managing diversity. The role of transnational organizations in shaping perspectives on pluralism necessitates critical examination to comprehend its implications for Islam's future. The challenge of transnational radicalism has spurred the development of alternative pluralism narratives rooted in Islamic tradition. Interactions between transnational movements and local communities have created new dynamics in the comprehension and practice of pluralism. These phenomena underscore the importance of cultivating pluralism understandings capable of responding to global challenges while preserving local wisdom (Arifin, 2009, pp. 80–92).

The development of liberation theology and progressive Islamic thought has introduced a new dimension that enriches understandings of pluralism. Conceptual frameworks linking pluralism with social justice have demonstrated the practical relevance of pluralism in struggles against injustice. Islamic theology advocating for the oppressed has established a robust ethical foundation for developing transformative pluralism. Studies examining the relationship between pluralism and liberation have produced intellectual syntheses integrating spirituality with social activism. Religion's role in social transformation remains inextricable from justice-oriented pluralism discourse. Liberation theology has contributed to developing pluralism understandings that are not merely tolerant but fundamentally transformative. This approach reveals that pluralism within Islam embodies a prophetic dimension relevant to contemporary human struggles (Hilmy, 2012, pp. 67–89).

This research aims to comprehensively explore the concept of pluralism from the perspective of Quranic exegesis (*tafsir*) and the thought of contemporary Muslim scholars. An in-depth study of exegetical methodologies for understanding verses related to pluralism is expected to establish a robust theoretical foundation for developing a more contextual understanding. The analysis of the perspectives of both proponents and critics of pluralism among Muslim scholars seeks to provide a more holistic understanding of the complexity of this discourse within Islamic thought. The exploration of pluralism models suitable for the Indonesian context is anticipated to offer practical contributions to the development of pluralism discourse and practice domestically. A critical assessment of pluralism implementation across various social contexts aims to identify existing challenges and opportunities. The development of practical strategies for fostering pluralism awareness is expected to provide guidance for efforts towards interreligious harmony. A thorough analysis of the roles of various stakeholders in supporting pluralism aims to formulate appropriate and applicable policy recommendations (Bahri, 2015, pp. 95–117).

This research is anticipated to make significant contributions to the development of contemporary Islamic thought, particularly in the fields of pluralism and interfaith dialogue. A deeper understanding of the theological foundations of pluralism can help address various misunderstandings prevalent in religious discourse. Critical analysis of different approaches to understanding pluralism is expected to enrich the Islamic intellectual tradition, making it more responsive to contemporary challenges. Exploring the relationship between pluralism and various contemporary issues may open new avenues for more progressive Islamic studies. Developing appropriate methodologies for studying pluralism is expected to provide a methodological contribution to the advancement of Islamic studies. Critical evaluation of various pluralism models can aid in developing more effective approaches within modern contexts. Integrating diverse perspectives in understanding pluralism can enrich contemporary Islamic discourse (T. Abdullah, 2010, pp. 1–22).

Practically, this research will provide tangible contributions to the increasingly urgent task of building interreligious harmony in contemporary Indonesia. Enhanced understanding of pluralism is expected to help

mitigate various religion-tinted conflicts still occurring in different regions. The development of effective interfaith dialogue models can offer practical guidance for religious communities in building constructive communication. Practical strategies for fostering pluralism awareness can help prevent radicalization and intolerance threatening social cohesion. The policy recommendations resulting from this research can assist stakeholders in developing effective programs supporting pluralism. Critical assessment of existing pluralism initiatives can help improve the effectiveness of similar programs in the future. A comprehensive approach to understanding pluralism can provide a solid foundation for building a more inclusive society (Nurmila, 2013, pp. 83–102).

Within the educational context, this research will provide meaningful contributions to developing more inclusive and contextual religious education curricula. A deeper understanding of pluralism can assist educators in developing learning materials that support interreligious harmony. Analysis of various pluralism education models can aid in formulating more effective and locally appropriate pedagogical approaches. Developing learning strategies that support pluralism can help shape a younger generation that is more tolerant and appreciative of diversity. Critical evaluation of existing religious education practices can help identify areas requiring improvement to achieve more inclusive educational goals. Recommendations for curriculum development can help enhance the quality of religious education responsive to diversity. Integrating pluralism values into the education system can strengthen the role of educational institutions in building a harmonious society (Ibrahim, 2015, pp. 67–89).

For civil society organizations (CSOs), this research will provide a strong theoretical and practical foundation for developing grassroots-level programs supporting pluralism. A deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in building pluralism can assist CSOs in formulating more effective strategies. Analysis of various community empowerment models based on pluralism can provide inspiration for developing innovative and contextually relevant programs. Critical assessment of various civil society initiatives can help enhance the impact of existing programs. Recommendations for strengthening the role of civil society can help optimize their contribution to building sustainable pluralism. Developing networks of cooperation among organizations can strengthen the pluralism movement at the community level. A participatory approach to building pluralism can increase community ownership of developed programs (Madjid, 2008, pp. 178–195).

Within the public policy context, this research will provide valuable input for developing policies supporting pluralism across various levels of government. In-depth analysis of various aspects of pluralism can assist policymakers in formulating more comprehensive and inclusive regulations. Critical evaluation of existing policy implementation can help identify areas needing refinement to achieve desired goals. Developing success indicators for pluralism programs can aid in measuring the effectiveness of implemented policies. Recommendations for policy improvement can help enhance the quality of government programs supporting pluralism. Analysis of inter-institutional coordination can help optimize the implementation of pluralism policies in the field. A holistic approach to policy development can strengthen the impact of executed programs (Barton, 1997, pp. 77–105).

Research Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach with an in-depth library study method. This approach allows the researcher to conduct an extensive exploration of primary and secondary sources, such as Qur'anic texts, exegesis works, academic books, journals, and relevant historical documents. Specifically, the research integrates several methodological frameworks to ensure a holistic and comprehensive analysis. First, an interdisciplinary approach is used to understand pluralism from various perspectives, combining insights from theology, sociology of religion, and comparative religious studies. Second, thematic analysis is applied to relevant Qur'anic verses to identify key themes concerning diversity, difference, and interreligious relations. Third, critical content analysis is performed on the thoughts of prominent Muslim scholars, such as Nurcholish Madjid and Muhammad Ali, to deeply excavate their views and place them within a broader intellectual dialectic. Lastly, a historical and contextual approach is utilized to understand the socio-historical background of the texts and ideas under review, ensuring that the resulting interpretations are not ahistorical and remain relevant to contemporary challenges.

Discussion

Qur'anic Exegesis on Pluralism

The Qur'an, as the primary source of Islamic teachings, contains numerous verses addressing religious diversity and interfaith relations. These verses require comprehensive and contextual understanding. Classical and contemporary *mufassirun* (Qur'anic exegetes) have offered diverse interpretations of these verses, reflecting the evolving dynamics of understanding shaped by their respective historical contexts. For instance, interpretations of Surah Al-Baqarah (2:62) have generated various perspectives on the salvation of adherents of other religions, a subject of ongoing scholarly debate. Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:48), which discusses the diversity of religious laws, serves as a crucial foundation for pluralism discourse, necessitating deep comprehension. The historical context of the revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*) of these verses is a vital consideration for accurately grasping the Qur'an's message on pluralism in accordance with the spirit of Islam. The application of hermeneutical approaches to these verses has facilitated broader and more contextually relevant interpretations. Achieving a comprehensive understanding of Qur'anic verses concerning pluralism requires interdisciplinary study incorporating diverse methodological approaches (Almirzanah, 2009).

Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13) provides a theological basis for the creation of humanity in diverse tribes and nations, intended for mutual recognition (*li ta'arafu*) and the construction of constructive relationships. Modern *mufassirun* such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida viewed this verse as legitimizing pluralism within the increasingly complex modern context. Contextual interpretation of this verse has yielded a more inclusive understanding of human relations that transcends primordial boundaries. Linguistic and semantic analysis of the word "*li ta'arafu*" ("that you may know one another") in this verse offers a new dimension for comprehending the purpose of diversity as a means for mutual learning and enrichment. The socio-historical context of its revelation provides insight into how Islam regards diversity as *sunnatullah* (divine design) to be managed wisely. The practical implications of understanding this verse for interfaith social relations require further investigation to identify constructive models of interaction. Diverse exegetical approaches to this verse have enriched the understanding of pluralism in Islam, rooted in universal values (Hidayat, 1998, p. 41).

Interpretations of Surah Al-Kafirun provide a crucial perspective on the boundaries of religious tolerance, requiring proportional understanding. The historical context of its revelation offers insight into wisely navigating differences in belief without compromising fundamental religious principles. Contemporary exegetes view this Surah as a foundation for building harmonious interfaith relations while preserving the distinct tenets of each faith. A linguistic analysis of its structure and rhetorical style yields a deeper understanding of interfaith dialogue ethics grounded in mutual respect for difference. Thematic studies linking this Surah with other Qur'anic verses on tolerance foster a more comprehensive understanding of Islam's stance toward religious diversity. Hermeneutical approaches to this Surah have yielded interpretations relevant to modern contexts characterized by increasingly intensive interreligious interaction. The practical implications of understanding this Surah within contemporary pluralism warrant further exploration to identify constructive models for dialogue (Mulkhan, 2014, pp. 305–321).

Qur'anic verses concerning Ahl al-Kitab (People of the Book) provide an essential conceptual framework for understanding Islam's relationship with the Abrahamic faiths. Exegesis of these verses has evolved alongside socio-historical changes in Muslim interactions with other religious communities. Contemporary exegetes have developed more inclusive understandings of the Ahl al-Kitab concept relevant to modern realities. Comparative studies of classical and modern interpretations of these verses reveal a dynamic evolution in understanding in response to contemporary challenges. Contextualizing the concept of Ahl al-Kitab within modern realities necessitates in-depth study that considers the complexity of contemporary interreligious relations. The theological and practical implications of various interpretations concerning Ahl al-Kitab require critical evaluation to establish constructive models of interaction. Developing appropriate exegetical methodologies for understanding verses about Ahl al-Kitab presents a distinct challenge within modern pluralism (Mujiburrahman, 2014, pp. 483–513).

Verses addressing religious freedom, such as "*La ikraha fi al-din*" (There is no compulsion in religion), provide a robust ethical foundation for developing an inclusive understanding of pluralism. Modern exegetes emphasize the paramount importance of respecting religious freedom as a fundamental Islamic principle reflecting the intrinsic dignity of humanity. A thorough examination of the historical context of this verse clarifies

Islam's perspective on belief plurality as a reality to be respected. Analyzing the historical implementation of the principle of religious freedom within Islamic history offers valuable lessons on the dynamics of interreligious relations. Contextual interpretations of this verse aid in formulating principles for constructive interfaith dialogue that honors difference. Critical evaluation of various interpretations of this verse helps identify approaches most relevant to the modern context, characterized by increasingly complex plurality. Developing exegetical methodologies that incorporate contemporary realities is vital for comprehending the universal message of this verse (Ali-Fauzi, 2015, pp. 167–192).

The construction of Muslim identity within Islamic thought is far from straightforward; rather, it constitutes a complex and dynamic process of interpretation. Muhammad Ali explains that there are two principal approaches to understanding the fundamental concept of the "Muslim." The first approach emphasizes Islam as a rigorous religious system, focusing on specific practices inherited from the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad. From this perspective, a Muslim is formally defined through adherence to the established Five Pillars of Islam (*rukun Islam*) and Pillars of Faith (*rukun iman*), such as the declaration of faith (*shahada*), prayer (*salah*), almsgiving (*zakat*), fasting (*sawm*), and pilgrimage (*hajj*).(*Freedom of Religion and Religious Pluralism*, 2023, pp. 40–49)

Conversely, the second approach offers a more universal and inclusive interpretation. Here, Islam is understood as the fundamental spiritual stance of submission to God, transcending the institutional and historical boundaries of any specific religion. This approach opens a broader space for interpretation, viewing Islam not merely as the religion of Muhammad, but as a universal spirit of submission discernible within diverse religious traditions. Ali argues that the Quran itself contains verses supporting both perspectives, thereby creating a rich space for intellectual dialectics in understanding religious identity.

This complexity is evident in the use of religious terminology such as faith (*iman*), disbelief (*kufr*), and polytheism (*shirk*), whose profound meanings resist simplification. These terms carry not only theological connotations but also deeply contextual ethical, social, and political dimensions. For instance, the term "*kafir*," often translated as "unbeliever" or "disbeliever," encompasses a broad spectrum of meanings. It signifies not merely the formal rejection of belief, but can also imply disobedience, ingratitude, or an arrogant stance toward divine truth. This dynamic of interpretation reflects the fact that the construction of Muslim identity is not a static entity, but an evolving dialogical process. Muslim scholars across generations and contexts have produced diverse interpretations, reflecting the complexity of the relationship between sacred texts, historical contexts, and ever-changing social realities. Ali astutely observes that beneath formal categorizing efforts lies a rich hermeneutic tradition enabling deeper understanding of spirituality and humanity.

In his work *Islam: Doctrine and Civilization*, Nurcholish Madjid emphasizes Islam's robust theological foundation for acknowledging religious plurality. Grounded in the doctrine of the Oneness of Universal Truth (*Tawḥīd*), he posits that all revealed religions (*adyān samāwiyyah*) essentially originate from the same principle: submission to God (*al-islām* in its generic sense). This conceptual framework underpins Islamic inclusivity, wherein truth is not monopolized by any single group but is accessible to all who affirm faith in God, the Final Day, and engage in righteous deeds (Q. 2:62).(Madjid, 2019, pp. 711–735)

Madjid substantiates his argument by citing Qur'anic verses and exegeses (including those of Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad Asad, and Yusuf Ali), demonstrating that:

a. Religious pluralism constitutes a divine decree (Q. 5:48) and is not a pretext for conflict.
b. Interfaith dialogue must be conducted in the most commendable manner (Q. 29:46), excepting engagement with oppressive groups.
c. Salvation is contingent not upon formal religious affiliation, but upon sincere faith and righteous action (Q. 2:62; 5:69).
d. Classical Islamic history attests to practices of tolerance, exemplified by the Constitution of Medina and the Covenant of Umar, which guaranteed religious freedom for non-Muslims.

Consequently, Islamic inclusivism does not equate to relativism rather, it recognizes a common ground (*kalimah sawā*) among religions: the worship of the One God and the rejection of all forms of polytheism (*shirk*) (Q. 3:64). The following Qur'anic verses serve as key textual foundations for these inclusive values according to

Nurcholish Madjid.

No.	Surah and Verse	Value of Inclusivism	Exegetical Context in Madjid's Interpretation
1.	Yunus (10):19	The primordial unity of humanity preceding religious differentiation.	Humanity was initially a single community; differences arose only after the advent of divine revelation.
2.	Al-Baqarah (2):213	The prophetic function as a guide to truth amidst divergence.	Prophets were sent with scriptures to resolve human disputes arising from divergent paths.
3.	Al-Anbiyā' (21):25	Unity of the prophetic mission: calling humanity to worship the One God.	The doctrine of Tawḥīd (Divine Oneness) constitutes the essence of all revealed religions.
4.	Al-Anbiyā' (21):92	Unity of the faithful across religious traditions.	Followers of all prophets form a singular faith community (ummah wāḥidah).
5.	Āl ʿImrān (3):19	The essence of true religion: submission (al-islām) to God.	The only religion acceptable to God is al-islām (understood generically as conscious submission).
6.	Āl ʿImrān (3):64	Interfaith dialogue based on shared principles: monotheism and justice.	An invitation to the People of the Book to establish common ground (kalimah sawāʾ) on core tenets.
7.	Āl ʿImrān (3):85	Rejection of religious formalism devoid of substantive submission.	Any system claiming to be a religion that does not entail true submission (islām) is unacceptable.
8.	Al-Baqarah (2):62	Soteriological inclusivism: Faith in God, the Last Day, and righteous deeds as universal criteria.	Jews, Christians, and Sabians who possess authentic faith and perform righteous deeds are assured salvation.
9.	Al-Mā'idah (5):69	Affirmation of soteriological inclusivism for diverse religious groups.	Reiteration of the assurance of salvation for faithful Jews, Christians, and Sabians.
10.	Al-Mumtaḥanah (60):8-9	Ethics of engagement with non-Muslims: upholding justice in the absence of hostility.	Muslims must act justly and kindly towards non-Muslims who do not engage in aggression against them.
11.	Al-ʿAnkabūt (29):46	Advocacy through superior discourse, except towards oppressors.	Dialogue with the People of the Book must be conducted courteously, grounded in shared monotheistic belief.
12.	Al-Baqarah (2):256	Prohibition of religious compulsion.	Truth must be embraced through conviction, not coercion.
13.	Yūnus (10):99	Affirmation of freedom of belief.	The Prophet lacks the authority to compel faith.
14.	Al-Mā'idah (5):48	Religious plurality as a divine test.	Human diversity constitutes part of God's design to spur virtuous competition (khayrāt).

Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur) posits that *Tawḥīd* (Divine Oneness) constitutes the theological foundation of Islamic inclusivism. This concept not only affirms the unity of divine truth but also necessitates the recognition of other religious manifestations as integral to the historical dynamics of humankind. Furthermore, Cak Nur rejects exclusivist soteriological perspectives, arguing that universal salvation hinges upon authentic faith (*īmān*) and righteous deeds (*ʿamal ṣāliḥ*), rather than formal religious affiliation (Qur'an 2:62). This is substantiated by his exegesis of the Qur'anic assurance granted to Jews, Christians, and Sabians who believe in God and perform virtuous acts.

Historically, the practices of the Prophet Muhammad and the *Khulafāʾ al-Rāshidūn* exemplified by the Constitution of Medina, which guaranteed religious freedom for Jews, and the Covenant of ʿUmar, which safeguarded Christian churches in Jerusalem provide concrete evidence of Islam's embrace of diversity. Cak Nur contends that this paradigm transcends transient political expediency, reflecting instead the theological responsibility of Muslims to act as *al-wasaṭ* (the just mediators) in interfaith relations (Q. 60:8-9).

Within the Indonesian context, Cak Nur perceives Pancasila and the nation's pluralism (*kebhinekaan*) as substantively harmonious with Islamic teachings. He asserts that the principle of "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity) aligns with the spirit of the Qur'anic concept *kalimah sawā*ʾ (a common word among faiths, Q. 3:64), provided it is not reduced to a mere political slogan. Thus, Islamic inclusivism, in his view, represents a middle path between relativism and exclusivism: it acknowledges religious plurality as a divine decree (Q. 5:48), while simultaneously demanding commitment to the universal ethics of *Tawḥīd* and justice.

Category	Core Belief	Key Arguments	Associated Islamic Scholars
Exclusive	Islam (Muhammadan Sharia) is the sole path to salvation.	QS. 3:19, 3:85; Hadith on the Pillars of Islam.	Majority of traditional scholars; Hamka (Indonesia).
Inclusive	Salvation is accessible to all who possess faith and perform righteous deeds, irrespective of formal religion.	QS. 2:62, 5:69, 4:123.	Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Gamal Al-Banna (liberal thinker).
Pluralist	Religious truth is universal; all paths may lead to God.	QS. 2:62 (Sufi exegesis); concept of *fitrah* (primordial nature).	Ibn Arabi, Kautsar Azhari Noer (Indonesia), Jerusha Lamptey (contemporary scholar).
Descriptive	Objectively understanding other religions for dialogue and tolerance.	QS. 49:13 (diversity as divine intent).	Mukti Ali (Indonesia); scholars of comparative religion.

Ali identifies four main theological positions within the Islamic intellectual tradition concerning the salvific status of non-Muslims, each offering a unique perspective on the relationship between faith, righteous deeds, and divine mercy. The exclusivist position, the most dominant in mainstream understanding, asserts that only those who follow Islam in its final form as revealed through the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad will attain salvation. The theological argumentation of this position relies on a literal interpretation of verses such as, "Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam" (Qur'an 3:19) and "Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him" (Qur'an 3:85) (Ali, 2023, p. 52)

The inclusivist position, conversely, opens a broader space for the possibility of salvation. Thinkers like Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida interpreted Qur'anic verses more comprehensively, emphasizing that faith and righteous deeds are the fundamental criteria for salvation. They interpreted verses such as "Indeed, those who believed and those who were Jews or Christians or Sabeans those who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness will have their reward with their Lord" (Qur'an 2:62) as evidence of the inclusivity of divine mercy that transcends formal religious boundaries.

The pluralist position, represented by thinkers such as Kautsar Azhari Noer and Ibn 'Arabi, adopts a more radical approach. They posit a single transcendental reality underlying all religions, with each religious tradition being a distinct expression of the same spiritual truth. Within this view, religious differences are understood as manifestations of human diversity in comprehending and approaching the Divine, rather than as barriers or absolute dichotomies. Concepts like *taqwa* (God-consciousness, piety) and *fitrah* (primordial human nature) are employed to demonstrate the universality of human spiritual capacity.

The descriptive position, the most contemporary, adopts an academic and dialogical approach. Rather than judging or claiming absolute truth, this approach focuses on understanding each religious tradition within its own internal framework. Figures like Mukti Ali emphasize the importance of comparative religious studies

aimed at fostering mutual understanding, tolerance, and social cohesion. This approach views religious diversity as a blessing enabling humans to know one another, engage in dialogue, and cooperate beyond theological differences. These four positions are not mutually exclusive but form a nuanced spectrum of thought, reflecting intellectual engagement with the complexity of the human relationship with the spiritual dimension.

Ethics of Interreligious Relations: Towards Dialogue and Tolerance

The concept of ethics in interreligious relations within Islamic thought, as analyzed by Muhamad Ali, is inseparable from the complex and contextual interpretation of Qur'anic verses. The principle of *"la ikraha fid-din"* (There shall be no compulsion in [matters of] religion, Qur›an 2:256) serves as the primary philosophical foundation for building an ethics of tolerance. This verse speaks not merely to the freedom to choose beliefs but also contains a profound message about respecting individual spiritual choices. Contemporary Muslim scholars like Abdullah Saeed interpret it as the basis for upholding universal religious rights that transcend the formal boundaries of religious institutions.

The concept of *"fastabiqul khairat"* (Strive together, as in a race, towards all that is good, cf. Qur›an 2:148, 5:48) offers a paradigm for constructive and positive interreligious interaction. More than passive tolerance, this concept encourages active dialogue and collaboration in humanitarian efforts. The Qur'an explicitly states that diversity is not a barrier but a means for mutual recognition and competition in goodness. Modern interpretations of this verse emphasize that religious difference is a divine will intended to test and impel humanity to continually enhance their spiritual and ethical qualities.

The principle of *"kalima sawa"* (a common word, Qur›an 3:64), introduced in the Qur›an, becomes a crucial instrument for building interfaith dialogue. Figures like Nurcholish Madjid interpret it as an invitation to find fundamental common ground between religions, focusing on the oneness of God and human dignity. This approach does not seek to obscure theological differences but to create a shared space enabling mutual understanding and cross-faith cooperation (Ali, 2023, p. 52).

In Ali's view, the ethics of interreligious relations is not merely a theoretical construct but a practical imperative for creating harmonious societies. Principles such as *"lakum dinukum waliya din"* (To you be your religion, and to me my religion, Qur›an 109:6) and the prohibition against disparaging or reviling others› beliefs affirm Islam›s ethical commitment to pluralism. Contemporary Muslim thinkers emphasize that tolerance does not imply theological relativism, but rather an acknowledgment of human spiritual complexity and the conviction that divine mercy is far more expansive than the institutional boundaries of religion constructed by humans.

Ali's analysis of pluralism in Islam reveals a complex narrative extending beyond superficial tolerance. In this context, pluralism is not merely an academic concept, but a profound spiritual calling to understand diversity as an expression of Divine grace. Islam's rich intellectual tradition demonstrates that the Quran was not intended to standardize a single interpretation; rather, it opens space for ongoing dialogue concerning the nature of faith, truth, and human relationships. This approach challenges both exclusive fundamentalism and shallow relativism. He offers a model of engagement that respects differences while affirming belief in universal spiritual principles. In his view, pluralism constitutes an active spiritual practice demanding intellectual openness, deep empathy, and an ethical commitment to continually seek common humanity. This does not entail ignoring differences, but rather perceiving diversity as an opportunity for collective spiritual growth.

The significance of Ali's thought lies in its ability to demonstrate that pluralism poses no threat to religious identity; instead, it represents the highest expression of spiritual conviction. Within an increasingly complex global context, his thinking offers a dialogic model that is not merely tolerant but transformative. It invites adherents of faith to transcend exclusive boundaries toward a deeper understanding of humanity's spiritual unity, without forfeiting the distinctiveness of their respective traditions. Ultimately, pluralism in Ali's perspective is an invitation to maintain continual openness toward boundless spiritual possibilities, grounded in the conviction that Divine grace far exceeds the limits of human understanding. He urges us to perceive diversity not as a source of conflict, but as a blessing enabling humanity to perpetually grow, learn, and understand one another.

Perspectives of Pro-Pluralism Scholars

Scholars advocating pluralism develop their arguments based on profound and systematic theological and

philosophical foundations. Nurcholish Madjid, a prominent pro-pluralism figure, constructs his argument on the concept of Islam's universality, emphasizing the inclusive nature of Islamic teachings in responding to diversity. Madjid asserts that pluralism is part of the divine design (*sunnatullah*), stating: "Absolute truth belongs solely to God, while human understanding of that truth is relative. Therefore, religious differences should be viewed as a blessing (*rahmat*), not a curse." (Madjid, 2019, p. 215)

Abdul Karim Soroush's thought on pluralism is grounded in his theory of the Contraction and Expansion of Religious Interpretation," which creates space for constructive interfaith dialogue. Soroush distinguishes between religion as divine truth and human understanding, which is relative: "Religion is one, but religious knowledge (*ma'rifat-e dini*) is diverse. Divine truth is like an ocean, while religions are merely small cups holding it.(Soroush, 2000, p. 132) Muhammad Arkoun proposed a deconstructive approach to understanding religious texts to open broader and more contextual space for pluralism. Arkoun critiqued hegemonic readings of sacred texts: "The Qur'an is not a dead monument, but a living discourse that must be liberated from the shackles of orthodoxy. Pluralism arises when we acknowledge the diversity of meanings within the text." (Arkoun, 1994, p. 56)

Farid Esack developed a liberation hermeneutic supporting pluralism, based on his experience in the struggle against injustice in South Africa. This group views pluralism as *sunnatullah* that must be accepted and managed wisely to build a more humanistic civilization. They argue that pluralism does not contradict the universal and inclusive fundamental principles of Islam. Their approach emphasizes the importance of interfaith dialogue and cooperation as an implementation of the Islamic teaching of being a mercy to all worlds (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*). (Sirry, 2011, pp. 411–431)

Fazlur Rahman made a significant methodological contribution to developing a pluralistic understanding of the Qur'an through a systematic and contextual approach. His "double movement" theory creates space for contextualizing Islamic teachings within modern pluralistic realities while maintaining fundamental principles. His Qur'anic hermeneutic emphasizes understanding the historical context and the moral ideal of revelation to ascertain its contemporary relevance. Rahman developed a methodology enabling productive dialogue between the text, its historical context, and contemporary realities to build a dynamic understanding. His concept of progressive revelation provides a theological basis for a pluralistic understanding of Islam responsive to the evolving times. His contribution to exegetical methodology has influenced many contemporary Muslim thinkers in developing more inclusive interpretations. His systematic approach to Qur'anic understanding provides crucial methodological tools for developing pluralistic thought rooted in Islamic tradition. (Baidhawy, 2007, pp. 15–30)

Mohammed Talbi developed the concept of dialogical Islam, emphasizing openness and inclusivity in understanding and practicing religion. His thought on pluralism is based on the understanding that diversity is God's will, to be respected and celebrated as humanity's spiritual wealth. Talbi stressed the importance of interfaith dialogue as a means to build mutual understanding and enrich the spirituality of each tradition. His concept of "historical Islam" helps distinguish between Islam's universal teachings and their historically bound interpretations. His approach opens space for recognizing truth in other religious traditions without compromising fundamental beliefs. Talbi developed a methodology enabling constructive dialogue between Islam and modernity while preserving the tradition's authenticity. His thought on the ethics of interfaith dialogue contributes significantly to developing pluralism rooted in spirituality (Shihab, 2001, pp. 89–112).

Hassan Hanafi developed the Islamic Left approach, integrating a liberation dimension with a pluralistic understanding of religion. His thought on pluralism is closely linked to the struggle against hegemony and injustice, which often uses religion for legitimization. Hanafi developed an exegetical methodology that considers the interests of the oppressed and gives voice to the marginalized. His approach emphasizes dialogue between tradition and modernity to find a productive synthesis. His thought on reconstructing tradition opens space for a pluralistic understanding of Islam oriented toward social justice. Hanafi stressed the need to build a theology responsive to contemporary challenges and capable of addressing community needs. His contribution to developing liberation theology adds a new dimension to understanding pluralism linked to human struggle (Hanafi, 1976).

Khaled Abou El Fadl made a significant contribution to developing a pluralistic understanding of *Shari'ah* through a sophisticated hermeneutical approach. His thought on authority in Islam creates space for more

dynamic interpretations of religious texts while respecting tradition. Abou El Fadl emphasizes the importance of considering universal moral values in interpreting Islamic law to prevent the misuse of texts for sectarian interests. His approach to understanding *Shari'ah* enables productive dialogue between Islamic tradition and modern values without sacrificing authenticity. His critique of textualist approaches provides a methodological foundation for pluralistic understanding faithful to the spirit of Islam. His thought on the ethics of disagreement (*ikhtilaf*) in Islam supports developing pluralism that respects interpretive diversity. His contribution to Islamic legal methodology offers a new perspective for understanding pluralism rooted in the *fiqh* tradition (al-Qaradawi, 2010, pp. 234–256).

Perspectives of Anti-Pluralism Scholars

Scholars opposing religious pluralism ground their arguments in profound concerns regarding its theological and practical implications. Anis Malik Thoha, a prominent critic of pluralism, conducts a rigorous historical and theological analysis of its perceived threat to the purity of Islamic creed (*aqīdah*). Thoha asserts that the Qur'ān itself explicitly distinguishes between the believer, designated as *khair al-bariyyah* (the best of creation), and the disbeliever, termed *syarr al-bariyyah* (the worst of creation).(*Zarkasyi*, 2021, p. 152) Adian Husaini further critiques pluralism as a product of Western liberal thought incompatible with fundamental Islamic principles. Yusuf al-Qaradawi establishes strict boundaries for tolerance, prohibiting doctrinal syncretism through systematic jurisprudential (*fiqh*) argumentation. This group emphasizes the fundamental distinction between tolerance as a social attitude and religious pluralism as a problematic theological doctrine. They contend that affirming the truth of all religions contravenes the principle of *tawḥīd* (God's Oneness), the core of Islamic teaching. While rejecting theological pluralism, these scholars endorse tolerance and social harmony within boundaries that preserve creedal purity (Thoha, 2015, pp. 45–67).

Muhammad 'Imarah develops a systematic critique of pluralism from a comprehensive theological and historical perspective. His work stresses that Islam's recognition of diversity as a social fact does not equate all religions theologically. 'Imarah argues that pluralism represents a form of intellectual Westernization threatening Islamic identity. His analysis of historical interfaith relations in Islamic societies demonstrates that Islamic tolerance possesses distinct characteristics from modern pluralist concepts. His critique of contemporary pluralist thought highlights perceived methodological and theological inconsistencies within their arguments. 'Imarah's conception of Islamic identity provides a foundation for rejecting pluralism while still affirming interreligious dialogue. His contributions to pluralism criticism discourse have significantly influenced contemporary Muslim thinkers (Imarah, 2011, pp. 123–145).

Din Syamsuddin critiques pluralism from the perspective of mainstream religious organizations, emphasizing moderation (*wasathiyah*). He rigorously distinguishes between pluralism as a religious doctrine requiring critical scrutiny. Syamsuddin argues that Muslims can accept and respect diversity without embracing the truth relativism inherent in pluralism. His analysis of pluralism's impact on religious life identifies a potential weakening of religious commitment that warrants caution. His critique suggests pluralist movements may harbor hidden agendas threatening the authenticity of religious understanding. Syamsuddin's concept of religious moderation offers an alternative more congruent with Indonesian Islamic characteristics. His development of the *wasathiyah* concept proposes a middle path between exclusivism and relativism (Syamsuddin, 2016, p. 78). Syamsuddin Arif delivers a profound methodological critique of using hermeneutics in interpreting Islamic religious texts. His analysis demonstrates that hermeneutics, frequently employed by pluralism advocates, originates from the tradition of Biblical criticism, carrying assumptions incompatible with Islamic concepts of revelation (*waḥy*). Arif contends that hermeneutics can lead to revelatory relativism, endangering fundamental Muslim beliefs. His critique of modern methodologies in Islamic studies underscores the need for caution when adopting approaches from other intellectual traditions. Arif's work on Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) methodology offers a more authentic alternative aligned with the Islamic scholarly tradition. His contributions to preserving Islamic scholarly traditions are crucial in the context of modernizing Islamic studies. His textual approach emphasizes continuity with proven classical methodologies (Arif, 2013, pp. 145–167).

Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi formulates a philosophical critique of pluralism based on a comprehensive Islamic worldview. His analysis indicates pluralism stems from a Western worldview with distinct epistemological and ontological assumptions. Zarkasyi argues that accepting pluralism threatens the integrity and coherence

of Islam as a holistic intellectual system. His critique of knowledge secularization highlights its severe impact on how Muslims understand their religion. Zarkasyi's framework for the Islamization of knowledge provides a structure for comprehending diversity without succumbing to relativism. His contributions to contemporary Islamic thought emphasize maintaining Islamic distinctiveness. His approach to modernity stresses the importance of critical dialogue that does not compromise fundamental principles (Zarkasyi, 2017, pp. 78–95).

The Imperative of Inclusive Religious Exegesis in Society

A national survey by PPIM (Center for the Study of Islam and Society) on religious tolerance within Indonesian higher education reveals significant challenges necessitating profound responses, particularly concerning approaches to religious exegesis. The findings indicate that a segment of university students, especially within religiously affiliated institutions, exhibit levels of religious tolerance requiring enhancement. This implies that the religious understanding currently taught or prevalent in academic settings has not been fully effective in fostering inclusive attitudes toward diversity. This situation constitutes a critical alarm for Qur'anic exegetes to re-evaluate both the methodologies and substantive interpretations conveyed to younger generations, particularly within academic environments (Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat UIN Jakarta (PPIM UIN JAKARTA), 2021).

The PPIM survey empirically demonstrates that cross-religious group social interaction serves as a pivotal factor positively influencing students' levels of religious tolerance. Students actively engaged in discourse and collaboration with peers from diverse religious backgrounds demonstrate a higher propensity for acceptance. This underscores that lived experience in building relationships with the other constitutes an irreplaceable form of social learning. Inclusive Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir) can provide the theological foundation to strengthen such positive interaction by foregrounding verses emphasizing universal human brotherhood (*ukhuwah basyariyah*) and the inherent value of diversity (Qur'an, Al-Hujurat: 13). Conversely, the PPIM data also indicate that the intensity of participation in certain religious activities, particularly those associated with campus *da'wa* (proselytizing) organizations, correlates negatively with the religious tolerance of some students. This correlation suggests the potential prevalence of exclusive doctrines or restrictive interpretations within these activities. Herein lies the vital antidotal role of inclusive exegesis, offering Qur'anic interpretations that emphasize the universality of human values, peace, and respect for other faiths. This approach aligns with the Qur'anic ethos rejecting compulsion in religion (Qur'an, Al-Baqarah: 256) and advocating wisdom in dialogue (Qur'an, An-Nahl: 125).

The PPIM findings further highlight the crucial role of lecturers and the overall campus climate. Lecturers' attitudes toward tolerance significantly influence the attitudes of Muslim students. This indicates that authoritative figures in scholarship possess substantial leverage in shaping students' religious perspectives. Inclusive Qur'anic exegesis, if consistently adopted and taught by lecturers or campus religious scholars, can function as a positive catalyst, fostering a more open intellectual climate that respects pluralism. Such an exegetical approach enables rigorous engagement with the sacred text by considering both its historical context and its contemporary relevance for life in diverse societies.

The PPIM survey also reveals contextual variations and differing needs across types of higher education institutions and student demographics. For instance, the influence of parental socioeconomic status on tolerance manifests more strongly in state universities. This heterogeneity demands non-uniform approaches. Inclusive exegesis, being inherently contextual, is capable of addressing specific challenges across varied campus environments while remaining anchored in the foundational Islamic principle of being a blessing to all creation (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*). It is precisely this flexibility and contextual sensitivity that renders this model of exegesis relevant for navigating the complexity of socio-religious realities in Indonesia, including within higher education. Consequently, promoting inclusive Qur'anic exegesis transcends mere academic discourse; it represents an urgent empirical imperative based on evidence of tolerance challenges within academia. The intellectual legacy of the Ciputat School tradition, exemplified by figures like Nurcholish Madjid who championed inclusivity, pluralism, and the contextualization of Islamic thought, provides a pertinent response. An exegetical approach that facilitates dialogue, honors difference, and emphasizes the Qur'an's universal human values is demonstrably essential for cultivating an educated generation that is both religiously committed and inclusively oriented. This aligns with the ideals of national education and the essential nature of Islam as a blessing to the entire creation

Synthesis of Thought

The debate concerning pluralism within Islam underscores the complexity inherent in understanding and implementing religious teachings within an increasingly diverse modern context. Differences in methodology and approaches to interpreting religious texts have yielded a spectrum of understandings, reflecting both the intellectual richness of Islam and the challenges in responding to modernity. The dialogue between the pro-pluralism and anti-pluralism factions has enriched the repository of contemporary Islamic thought through valuable perspectives and arguments. Common ground between these groups can be found in their shared commitment to fostering harmonious religious coexistence without compromising fundamental principles. Existing differences in viewpoint should not impede collective efforts to address the challenges faced by religious communities in the modern era. A synthesis of thought can be constructed by proportionally considering the concerns and aspirations of both sides. A deeper and more balanced understanding of pluralism can pave the way for more constructive interfaith dialogue (Maarif, 2011, pp. 178–195).

Analysis of the pro-pluralism arguments reveals a serious endeavor to contextualize Islamic teachings within complex and dynamic modern realities. The hermeneutic approach they have developed opens space for a more dynamic understanding of religious texts, without intending to disregard their authority. Their intellectual contributions to the advancement of contemporary exegetical methodologies have enriched Islamic discourse with relevant new perspectives. Their efforts to build bridges between Islam and modernity offer crucial insights for confronting contemporary challenges. Their concern regarding religious radicalism and extremism reflects a deep care for the future of the Muslim community (*ummah*). The inclusive approach they propose provides an alternative for establishing more constructive interfaith relations. Their contribution to the development of progressive Islamic thought has opened broader avenues for dialogue with diverse intellectual traditions.(Husaini, 2013, pp. 89–112)

Critiques from the anti-pluralism camp reflect a profound concern for safeguarding the purity of Islamic creed (*aqidah*) amidst various challenges of modernity. Their apprehension regarding religious relativism, which could erode fundamental beliefs of the community, warrants serious consideration within pluralism discourse. Their efforts to maintain theological boundaries in interfaith relations provide important guidance for responsible pluralistic practice. Their methodological critiques of modern hermeneutic approaches help identify potential problems in the adoption of foreign methodologies. Their conceptualization of the limits of tolerance offers a practical framework for interfaith relations that preserves identity. Their contribution to preserving classical Islamic scholarly traditions helps maintain the continuity of Islamic thought. Their approach to understanding religious texts provides a vital counterbalance within pluralism discourse (Ismail, 2014, pp. 123–145).

A synthesis between these two perspectives can commence from a mutual recognition of the complexity of the pluralism issue within the modern context, which necessitates a balanced approach. A more nuanced understanding of the various levels and dimensions of pluralism can help bridge existing differences in perspective. The development of methodologies that integrate the concerns of both groups presents a significant challenge requiring creative solutions. Efforts to foster constructive dialogue between the two camps must be continually encouraged to achieve mutual understanding. Identifying areas for practical cooperation in addressing shared challenges can help build trust between the groups. The development of a more balanced discourse on pluralism needs support to avoid polarization. The contributions of both groups in building a more comprehensive understanding of pluralism deserve appreciation and further development.

Recommendations

Based on a comprehensive analysis of diverse perspectives on pluralism in Islam, several critical recommendations can be proposed for advancing future discourse and practice. Studies on pluralism in Islam should be continuously developed using a more integrative approach that incorporates diverse viewpoints. Constructive academic dialogues between proponents and opponents of pluralism must be facilitated to identify productive common ground. Further research is required to explore models of pluralism suitable for the Indonesian context without compromising fundamental Islamic principles. The development of Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*) methodologies that engage with contemporary realities should be pursued while maintaining continuity with tradition. Efforts to foster pluralistic awareness should adopt balanced approaches that respect all parties' sensitivities. Interfaith dialogue programs ought to be designed with innovative formats and broader societal participation. Periodic

evaluations of the effectiveness of pluralism initiatives should be conducted for program refinement.

Developing inclusive religious education curricula is a key priority for fostering constructive pluralistic understanding. Islamic higher education institutions should establish specialized programs examining pluralism from multidisciplinary perspectives. Training for religious educators must be enhanced to improve their capacity in teaching diversity-related content. Teaching materials integrating both pro- and anti-pluralism perspectives should be developed to provide comprehensive understanding. Collaboration between educational institutions and religious organizations requires strengthening to create effective educational programs. Collaborative research across educational institutions should be encouraged to enrich pluralism studies. Systematic impact assessments of pluralism education programs are essential for continuous improvement.

Strengthening media's role in constructing constructive pluralistic narratives is urgent in the digital era. Social media platforms should be encouraged to implement policies supporting healthy interfaith dialogue. Media literacy programs need development to help communities critically engage with religious information. Collaboration between mainstream media and religious communities must be reinforced to create content supporting pluralism. Effective communication strategies promoting pluralistic values should be developed with consideration for new media dynamics. Training for journalists and content creators should enhance their sensitivity to religious issues. Regular monitoring and evaluation of media program impacts are imperative. Reinforcing institutions supporting interfaith dialogue and cooperation is crucial for practical pluralism. Interfaith dialogue forums should be strengthened through broader multi-stakeholder engagement. Community empowerment programs based on interfaith cooperation require development to enhance social cohesion. Networking among religious organizations must expand to optimize resource utilization. Conflict resolution mechanisms leveraging local wisdom should be promoted to prevent tension escalation. Sustainable training for religious leaders in facilitating interfaith dialogue is essential. Evaluations of dialogue program effectiveness should inform future strategy refinement.

Public policies supporting pluralism should be developed comprehensively and inclusively. Governments need more effective regulations protecting religious freedom and preventing discrimination. Government programs fostering interreligious harmony must be strengthened through public participation. Inter-agency governmental coordination on religious issues requires enhancement for program efficacy. Systematic monitoring and evaluation frameworks for pluralism policies should be established. Government–civil society collaboration in implementing pluralistic policies needs reinforcement. Periodic assessments of public policy impacts on interreligious harmony are necessary.

Conclusion

Based on this research, it can be concluded that pluralism within the Islamic intellectual tradition far exceeds a mere sociological concept; rather, it is a profound spiritual calling to understand diversity as an expression of rahmatan lil 'alamin (mercy to all worlds) from God. An analysis of the sacred texts shows that the Qur'an itself explicitly and implicitly affirms strong principles of inclusivity, such as the recognition of the diversity of creation and the encouragement to seek common ground (kalimah sawa). This challenges exclusive interpretations that tend to narrow the meaning of salvation and identity. Furthermore, this research highlights how contemporary Muslim thinkers such as Nurcholish Madjid and Muhammad Ali have successfully revitalized this tradition with what is termed "soteriological inclusivism," which asserts that salvation is determined not by formal affiliation but by the quality of a person's faith and righteous deeds, regardless of their religious background. Thus, this study demonstrates that pluralism is not a threat, but a foundation for building a more just and peaceful society. The implementation of pluralism in the modern context requires Muslims to actively engage in dialogue, understand diversity as a richness, and continuously seek truth within a framework of universal ethics that aligns with the fundamental teachings of Islam.

Acknowledgment

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