

CONTEXTUALIZING LIBERATION THEOLOGY IN INDONESIAN RELIGIOUS LITERATURE THROUGH THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID

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ABSTRACT

The writing on liberation theology, which originally developed in the Latin American Christian tradition, has found its resonance in contemporary Islamic thought. K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid is one of the Indonesian Muslim figures who made significant contributions to the development of this discourse. This research aims to analyze the manifestation of liberation theology in Gus Dur's thought as well as identify its distinctive characteristics through the study of the book "Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita" with a qualitative approach and content analysis method. The main findings of the study reveal three distinctive characteristics of Gus Dur's liberation theology: an innovative synthesis of traditional fiqh with modern social justice principles, particularly in his advocacy of minority rights; the reinterpretation of religious texts to challenge authoritarian interpretations, reflected in his defense of religious freedom and democratic values; and the development of an Indonesian model of Islamic pluralism that emphasizes grassroots empowerment. The practical significance of the findings provides a theoretical foundation for interfaith dialogue, minority protection, and democratic reform in contemporary Indonesia. The unique contribution of this research lies in documenting how Gus Dur successfully bridged the gap between Islamic traditionalism and modern progressive thought, creating an Indonesian approach to liberation theology that remains relevant to address contemporary social challenges, and providing a foundation for understanding how religious thought can be mobilized for social transformation in pluralistic societies.

Keywords: Gus Dur, Indonesian religious thought, Liberation Theology

Pluralism, Progressive Islamic discourse

ABSTRAK

Tulisan tentang teologi pembebasan, yang awalnya berkembang dalam tradisi Kristen Amerika Latin, telah menemukan resonansinya dalam pemikiran Islam kontemporer. K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid adalah salah satu tokoh Muslim Indonesia yang memberikan kontribusi signifikan dalam pengembangan wacana ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis manifestasi teologi pembebasan dalam pemikiran Gus Dur serta mengidentifikasi karakteristik khasnya melalui studi buku "Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita" dengan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode analisis konten. Temuan utama penelitian mengungkapkan tiga karakteristik khas teologi pembebasan Gus Dur: sintesis inovatif antara fikih tradisional dengan prinsip keadilan sosial modern, khususnya dalam advokasi hak-hak minoritas; reinterpretasi teks keagamaan untuk menantang penafsiran otoritarian, yang tercermin dalam pembelaannya terhadap kebebasan beragama dan nilai-nilai demokratis; serta pengembangan model pluralisme Islam khas Indonesia yang menekankan pemberdayaan akar rumput. Signifikansi praktis dari temuan ini memberikan fondasi teoritis untuk dialog antariman, perlindungan minoritas, dan reformasi demokratis di Indonesia kontemporer. Kontribusi unik penelitian ini terletak pada dokumentasi bagaimana Gus Dur berhasil menjembatani kesenjangan antara tradisionalisme Islam dan pemikiran progresif modern, menciptakan pendekatan teologi pembebasan khas Indonesia yang tetap relevan untuk mengatasi tantangan sosial kontemporer, serta memberikan landasan pemahaman tentang bagaimana pemikiran religius dapat dimobilisasi untuk transformasi sosial dalam masyarakat

Kata kunci : *Gus Dur, Pemikiran Keagamaan Indonesia, Teologi Pembebasan, Pluralisme, Wacana Islam Progresif*

INTRODUCTION

Islam, as a religion with a universal mission to promote mercy for all of nature, is continually faced with the challenge of responding to various complex humanitarian issues.¹ Socioculturally, the complexity of Indonesia's multicultural society requires theological thinking that transcends primordial

¹ Muhammad Zakki, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Kitab Tasawuf Al-Muntakhabāt Karya KH. Ahmad Asrori Al-Ishaqi," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 19, no. 1 (2021): 269–306, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlk.v19i1.928>.

boundaries.² Colonial history, national identity formation, and the dynamics of identity politics have created social fragmentation that requires epistemological reconciliation through a transformative theological approach.³ The complexity of intergroup relations in Indonesia remains a significant social challenge. Based on data from the SETARA Institute for Democracy and Peace, there were 175 identity-based social conflicts throughout 2022, with the majority of conflicts caused by primordial differences in religion and ethnicity.⁴ These conflicts show the fragility of social cohesion and require transformative thinking to deconstruct social structures that have the potential to trigger disintegration. In the midst of increasingly rapid globalization and modernization, Muslims are required to be able to present interpretations of religion that are not only relevant to the times but also able to answer fundamental problems such as poverty, injustice, and oppression. In this context, the thought of liberation theology in Islam becomes very important to be studied and developed.⁵

The dynamics of contemporary global civilization present a complexity of challenges that fundamentally question the role of religion in the modern socio-political context.⁶ Global transformations characterized by technological advances, shifting economic structures, and changing social paradigms have created

² Z Qodir, "Contemporary Islamic Thought in Indonesia 2010-2023: Contested Public Sphere," *Insight Turkey* 26, no. 2 (2024): 299–318, <https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2024262.15>.

³ Asmarani Dini, Sarah Monica, and Sari D. Ratri, "The Tension of Religion-Tradition and the Ideas of Women'S Liberation in 'Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood', a Novel By Fatima Mernissi," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 20, no. 2 (2022): 289–318, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v20.i2.1040>.

⁴ Syera Anggreini Buntara, "Kondisi Kebebasan Beragama/Berkeyakinan (KBB) 2022," setara-institute.org, 2023, <https://setara-institute.org/siaran-pers-kondisi-kebebasan-beragamaberkeyakinan-kbb-2022/>.

⁵ A Mannan, "Islam Dan Negara," *Islamuna: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 2014, <https://ejournal.iainmadura.ac.id/index.php/islamuna/article/view/566>.

⁶ Zaenal Abidin Eko Putro, "Pengayaan Literasi Keagamaan Melalui Akses Buku Keagamaan Penyuluh Agama Di Sulawesi Utara," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 18, no. 1 (2020): 250–73, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlk.v18i1.605>.

a new dialogical space in understanding the function of religion as a force of liberation and social transformation. In this context, religion is no longer seen as a static entity bound to normative texts, but rather as a dynamic system of meaning capable of responding to changing times by maintaining its spiritual essence.⁷ This dynamic requires a reinterpretation of the theological basis that has been considered final and *taken for granted*, towards a more contextual, humanist, and transformativereading.⁸

One of the Indonesian Muslim figures who has contributed significantly to the development of progressive Islamic thought and liberation theology is K.H Abdurrahman Wahid, better known as Gus Dur.⁹ As a Muslim scholar, former president of the Republic of Indonesia, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) figure, Gus Dur has left a rich and multidimensional intellectual legacy. His visionary and often controversial thinking has given its own color to Islamic discourse in Indonesia and the world. Liberation theology, which originally developed in the Christian tradition in Latin America as a response to poverty and social injustice, has found its resonance in contemporary Islamic thought.¹⁰

In the context of Islam, liberation theology can be understood as an attempt to interpret religious teachings within the framework of the struggle against all forms of oppression and injustice.¹¹ Gus Dur, through his various writings and socio-political activism, has articulated ideas that are in line with the

⁷ M A Fuadi, "Religious Moderation in the Context of Integration Between Religion and Local Culture in Indonesia," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 1 (2024): 47–59, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol19no1.4>.

⁸ M Anis, "The Implementation of Abdurrahman Wahid's Vision in Leadership to Create a Pluralistic Muslim Society in Indonesia: A Sufism Perspective and Discourse Analysis," *Advanced Science Letters* 22, no. 12 (2016): 4524–27, <https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2016.8209>.

⁹ T Taufani, "Pemikiran Pluralisme Gusdur," *Jurnal Dakwah Tabligh*, 2018, <https://journal3.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/tabligh/article/view/7475>.

¹⁰ Greg Soetomo, "The Construct Of Muslim Society In The Perspective Of Sayyid Qutb," *Progresiva : Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (2020): 93–105, <https://doi.org/10.22219/progresiva.v9i2.13251>.

¹¹ A Akram, "Your 'Liberation,' My Oppression: European Violations of Muslim Women's Human Rights," *Indonesian Journal of International and Comparative Law* 5, no. 3 (2018): 427–72.

spirit of this liberation theology. Liberation theology in the thought of K.H Abdurrahman Wahid is a unique manifestation of the combination of the Islamic tradition of pesantren, global insight, and sensitivity to contemporary socio-political issues. Gus Dur, with his diverse educational background, from traditional pesantren to universities in the Middle East and Europe, managed to develop a distinctive perspective in understanding and articulating the role of Islam in the context of human liberation from various forms of oppression and injustice. The study of liberation theology in Gus Dur's thought is becoming increasingly relevant amid the increasing challenges faced by Muslims in Indonesia and the world.¹² The phenomenon of religious radicalism, widening economic inequality, ecological crisis, and various forms of discrimination demand a theological response that is not only able to provide explanations, but also encourages real action for change. In this context, Gus Dur's thoughts on liberation theology offer a rich and multidimensional perspective for further study.

Recent articles on liberation theology in the Indonesian Islamic context have shown interesting developments. For example, a study conducted by Ghofur reveals that the idea of liberation theology has influenced progressive Islamic movements in Indonesia in the past decade.¹³ Meanwhile, Rosidi, in his article on the inclusiveness of Gus Dur's religious thought, highlights the contribution of Gus Dur's thought in developing Islamic interpretations that are more inclusive and oriented towards upholding social justice.¹⁴ Another study conducted by Kalyanasis examines Abdurrahman Wahid's concept of pluralism and its

¹² Zuly Qodir and Haedar Nashir, "Islamity, Humanity, Indonesianity, and Culture: A Comparative Study on Ahmad Syafii Maarif, Nurcholis Madjid, and Abdurrahman Wahid," *Afkaruna* 15, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.18196/aiijis.2019.0104.226-253>.

¹³ A Ghofur, "The Implications of Democratization towards Deformalization of Islamic Law in Indonesia: Study on Abdurrahman Wahid's Thoughts," *International Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology* 8, no. 6 (2017): 70–84.

¹⁴ Rosidi Rosidi, "Inklusivitas Pemikiran Keagamaan Abdurrahman Wahid," *KALAM* 10, no. 2 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.24042/klm.v10i2.9>.

implications for Islamic education, where he identifies Gus Dur's ideas as one of the main sources of inspiration for the moderate Islamic movement in this country.¹⁵

Although there have been several studies that examine Gus Dur's thought in the context of progressive Islam and liberation theology, there is still a gap in the writing of articles that specifically and deeply analyze the manifestation of the idea of liberation theology in Gus Dur's works, especially in the book "My Islam, Your Islam, Our Islam". This book, which is a collection of Gus Dur's essays, is considered one of the most comprehensive works in describing his Islamic thought.¹⁶ In contrast to previous studies that tend to examine Gus Dur's thought in general, this research specifically analyzes the elements of liberation theology contained in the book, especially in the context of contemporary challenges faced by Indonesian Muslims. An in-depth analysis of the book "My Islam, Your Islam, Our Islam" is expected to reveal new aspects of Gus Dur's thoughts on liberation theology, especially how he articulates these ideas in the Indonesian context by considering the complexity of the relationship between religion, society, and the state.

This article aims to analyze how liberation theology was manifested in the thought of K.H Abdurrahman Wahid, as well as exploring the relevance of his thought in facing contemporary muslim challenges, especially as reflected in the book "My Islam, Your Islam, Our Islam". This article examines how Gus Dur's theological framework provides practical solutions for addressing contemporary challenges in Indonesian society, particularly in bridging ideological differences between traditional Islamic values and modern democratic principles. Gus Dur's thought, which is deeply rooted in the pesantren tradition yet also open to modernity and universal values, serves as the main unit of analysis in this article. The focus of analysis will be on the book "My Islam,

¹⁵ Kalyanasis Bhattacharyya, "A Quagmire of Parochialism: The Ethics of Refugee Children'S Education," *Khazanah Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2021): 10–20, <https://doi.org/10.15575/kp.v3i1.10408>.

¹⁶ A Wahid, *Islamku Islam Kita* (Agama Masyarakat Negara Demokrasi) (2006) Jakarta, *The Wahid Institut*, 2006. 231

Your Islam, Our Islam", which was published in 2006 and contains a collection of Gus Dur's essays on various Islamic and national issues. This paper also aims to open a space for critical dialogue about the role of Muslim intellectuals in transforming society, with Gus Dur as an example of progressive thinking.

The novelty of this article lies in several aspects. First, this article represents the first systematic attempt to analyze Gus Dur's thought within the framework of liberation theology, with a special focus on the book "My Islam, Your Islam, Our Islam." Second, this article aims to contextualize Gus Dur's thought in relation to recent developments in progressive Islamic discourse and liberation theology at the global level. Third, this article aims to explore the relevance of Gus Dur's thought in facing contemporary Muslim challenges, such as radicalism, intolerance, and socio-economic inequality.

This article is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of liberation theology discourse in the Indonesian Islamic context. By analyzing the thoughts of one of the most influential Muslim figures in Indonesia, this article aims to enrich our understanding of how Islamic teachings can be interpreted and applied to address contemporary social, political, and economic challenges. Furthermore, it is also expected to inspire the development of more progressive, inclusive, and social justice-oriented interpretations of Islam in Indonesia and the Muslim world at large. In a global context where Islam is often misunderstood and associated with extremism, Gus Dur's thoughts that emphasize a peaceful, tolerant, and just Islam are very relevant. An analysis of his thought within the framework of liberation theology is expected to provide an alternative narrative of Islam that is more constructive and humanistic. So, this article also has practical implications in efforts to build a more just and harmonious society.

METHOD

This article adopts a qualitative approach with a focus on content analysis to examine the manifestation of liberation theology in the thought of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid. The choice of content analysis over other qualitative methods, such as

phenomenology or case studies, is based on several key considerations: first, content analysis is well-suited for examining written material and uncovering both explicit and implicit meanings in texts. Second, in contrast to discourse analysis, which primarily focuses on language use and construction, content analysis allows for the systematic categorization of themes while keeping context in mind. Third, the method allows researchers to trace the evolution of ideas across different texts, which is crucial for understanding the development of Gus Dur's theological thought over time.¹⁷ In the context of this article, this approach is particularly relevant to understanding the nuances and complexities of Gus Dur's thoughts on liberation theology, as expressed in his works. The main source of data for this paper is the book "My Islam, Your Islam, Our Islam" by K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, published in 2006. This book was chosen because it represents a mature synthesis of Gus Dur's thoughts, covering various topics relevant to liberation theology in the Indonesian Islamic context. In addition, this article also utilizes secondary sources in the form of articles, books, and other documents that discuss Gus Dur's thought and liberation theology in Islam. These secondary sources serve to enrich the context and provide additional perspectives in the analysis. Although this article does not involve direct participants as it focuses on text analysis, the main subject of the article is the thought of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid as articulated in his works. Gus Dur, as an influential Muslim intellectual figure, becomes the focus of analysis through his writings that reflect ideas about progressive Islam and liberation.

The method of data collection is through literature study. This process involves several stages. First, the author identified and inventoried relevant texts in the book "My Islam, Your Islam, Our Islam". This stage includes a thorough reading of the book to identify parts related to the concept of liberation theology. Secondly, a search for secondary literature that discusses Gus Dur's thought and liberation theology was conducted. This

¹⁷ Saldana Miles, Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, SAGE Open, vol. 30, 2014. 44

literature includes journal articles, books, and other relevant documents. Third, the collected data is categorized and coded based on the themes that emerge. The coding process follows a systematic three-phase approach. First, initial open coding involves labeling text segments with initial codes. Second, axial coding, where relationships between codes were identified and grouped into broader categories. Third, selective coding, where core themes were refined and integrated into a coherent theoretical framework. The codebook was developed and continuously refined throughout the analysis process, with clear definitions and examples for each code. The coding scheme specifically focused on identifying elements of liberation theology such as social justice advocacy, religious pluralism, and empowerment of marginalized groups. In the data collection process, the author uses *close reading* techniques to ensure a deep understanding of the text.¹⁸ This technique involves repeated and careful reading of each part of the text, paying attention not only to explicit content but also to nuances, context, and implicit meanings. Additionally, the author took extensive notes and compiled analytical memos during the data collection process to facilitate a deeper analysis.

Data analysis involved interpreting the texts in light of the historical and socio-political context in which they were written. Thematic coding was then used to organize the data based on categories that emerged from the texts and the theoretical frameworks used. These categories include key elements of liberation theology such as critique of oppressive social structures, reinterpretation of religious texts from the perspective of the oppressed, praxis as a combination of theological reflection and social action, empowerment of marginalized communities, and interfaith and cultural dialogue. Furthermore, the author contextualizes the analysis by considering Gus Dur's historical, social, and intellectual background, as well as Indonesia's socio-political dynamics. This is important to understand how Gus Dur's thoughts on liberation theology are formed and interact with socio-political realities in Indonesia. The author conducts an

¹⁸ Lexy J. Moelong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2014. 65

analytical synthesis to construct a comprehensive understanding of liberation theology in Gus Dur's thought. This synthesis includes the articulation of key concepts, identification of Gus Dur's unique contribution to the discourse of liberation theology, and reflection on the relevance of his thought in the contemporary context.

To ensure the validity of the article, a comprehensive validation strategy was applied. First, triangulation, conducted in two ways: namely, source triangulation by comparing various works by Gus Dur, including books, articles, and lecture transcripts related to liberation theology, and method triangulation by combining content analysis and historical analysis. This triangulation process helped identify consistent patterns across sources while highlighting potential differences or evolving perspectives. Second, peer debriefing involved regular consultations with senior academics with expertise in Islamic studies and liberation theology, who provided critical feedback on the analysis and interpretations. Third, thick description was used to present a rich and contextualized analysis that took into account historical, cultural, and social contexts. Finally, the author maintains an audit trail documenting all analytical decisions and methodological choices while applying reflexivity by explicitly acknowledging and reflecting on epistemological positions and assumptions that may influence interpretations.¹⁹

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

The Concept of Liberation Theology in Gus Dur's Thought

K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid revealed that the concept of liberation theology developed by him has distinctive characteristics and is contextual to the Indonesian reality, that Gus Dur consistently articulates liberation theology as an approach that combines theological reflection with real action to realize social

¹⁹ U H Graneheim, "Methodological Challenges in Qualitative Content Analysis: A Discussion Paper," *Nurse Education Today* 56 (2017): 29–34, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2017.06.002>.

justice and human liberation from various forms of oppression.²⁰ The definition and characteristics of liberation theology according to Gus Dur are identified through several key themes that recur in the book. First, Gus Dur emphasized that liberation theology must be rooted in a contextual understanding of religion and responsive to the concrete problems faced by society.²¹

Second, the analysis shows that Gus Dur views liberation theology as a dialogical process between religious texts and social reality. He argued that religious interpretation should not stop at the textual level, but must be actualized in the contemporary socio-political context.²² Third, liberation theology in Gus Dur's thought strongly emphasizes the praxis aspect. This is shown by the high frequency of using terms such as "*action*", "*struggle*", and "*social change*" which are always associated with theological reflection.²³

In contextualizing liberation theology in the Indonesian reality, Gus Dur showed great sensitivity to the country's socio-political complexity and cultural diversity.²⁴ The analysis found that Gus Dur consistently linked the principles of liberation theology to specific issues facing Indonesia, such as religious pluralism, democracy, and minority rights. One important finding is how Gus Dur adapted the concept of liberation theology, which originally developed in the Latin American Christian context, into Indonesian Islamic discourse. He did this in a creative way, blending classical Islamic intellectual treasures with modern thinking on social justice. This is not just about ritual worship, but

²⁰ A K Umam, "Wahid, Abdurrahman," *Religion in Southeast Asia: An Encyclopedia of Faiths and Cultures*, 2015, 343–45, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?partnerID=HzOxMe3b%5C&scp=85208331935%5C&origin=inward>.

²¹ A Wahid, *Islamku Islam Anda Islam Kita* (Agama Masyarakat Negara Demokrasi) (2006) Jakarta, *The Wahid Institut*, 2006. 351

²² Ibid, 352.

²³ Ibid, 131.

²⁴ N Saada, "The Theology of Islamic Education from Salafi and Liberal Perspectives," *Religious Education* 113, no. 4 (2018): 406–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2018.1450607>.

also about upholding justice on earth²⁵

In addition, Gus Dur also understood liberation theology as an inclusive and interfaith approach. He argued that the struggle against injustice and oppression is a common task of all religions, not the monopoly of one particular religious tradition.²⁶ The contextualization of liberation theology in the Indonesian reality is also evident from how Gus Dur relates it to the concepts of Pancasila and Unity in Diversity. Gus Dur views these two concepts as philosophical foundations that are in line with the spirit of liberation theology. He argued that the values of Pancasila, especially social justice and just and civilized, are manifestations of liberation principles in the Indonesian context. Gus Dur also consistently criticized rigid and textualist theological approaches, which he considered could actually be a tool of oppression. He emphasized the importance of *ijtihad* and the renewal of Islamic thought to respond to the challenges of the times.²⁷

The current context shows the continued relevance of Gus Dur's thinking in facing the challenges of socio-religious complexity in Indonesia. Data from the SETARA Institute's research center shows that the potential for identity-based conflict remains a serious threat to national social cohesion. In this context, Gus Dur's framework of thinking about pluralism and dialogue between civilizations is very significant. The dialogical approach he developed was able to bridge the social fragmentation caused by religious and ethnic primordialism.²⁸ Gus Dur's thinking model does not merely offer conflict resolution, but presents a new

²⁵ Anwar Masduki, "Pilgrimage as a New Way to Define and Characterize the Sainthood," *DINIKA : Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2018): 221–38, <https://doi.org/10.22515/dinika.v3i2.114>.

²⁶ A Wahid, "Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita, Kata Pengantar M Syafi'i Anwar," *Jakarta: The Wahid Institute*, 2006. 135

²⁷ M Khusna Amal, "Explaining Islamic Populism in Southeast Asia: An Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Perspective," *Journal of Critical Reviews* 7, no. 5 (2020): 583–88, <https://doi.org/10.31838/jcr.07.05.121>.

²⁸ A Khoirudin, "Exploring Muhammadiyah's Historical Civilizational Dimension of Social Reconstruction in Indonesia: Humanitarian and Cosmopolitan Approaches," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 15, no. 1 (2020): 183–97, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol15no1.13>.

epistemology in understanding differences as social capital, not a threat. His critical interpretation of religious tradition shows that religion is actually a source of inspiration for social transformation, not an instrument of polarization.

These findings show that the concept of liberation theology in Gus Dur's thought has unique characteristics, combining Islamic tradition with modern insights on social justice and human rights. Gus Dur's contextualization not only makes this concept relevant to the Indonesian reality but also makes an important contribution to the development of the discourse of liberation theology in Islam globally. Gus Dur's thinking on liberation theology is not static, but rather develops and responds to socio-political changes in Indonesia. This can be seen from how he links the concept of liberation with contemporary issues such as democratization, reformation, and globalization. Overall, these findings confirm Gus Dur's position as one of the most influential Muslim thinkers in developing and contextualizing liberation theology in Indonesia. His thought provides not only a theoretical foundation but also practical guidance for the struggle against injustice and oppression in the context of a plural and complex society like Indonesia.²⁹

A Critique of Oppressive Social and Political Structures

In the process of analyzing, the author found that Gus Dur consistently and sharply criticized the social and political structures that he considered oppressive.³⁰ This criticism became one of the main pillars in his liberation theology thinking. Gus Dur not only identifies problems, but also offers new perspectives on how religion, especially Islam, can play a role in fighting structural oppression. One of the most fundamental criticisms that

²⁹ Yusdani, "Islam and Prosper Indonesia: Contestation and Fragmentation of Contemporary Islamic Thought," *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies* 22, no. 1 (2023): 205–34, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol22.iss1.art8>.

³⁰ Masyhud Masyhud, "Pluralisme: Studi Atas Pemikiran, Sikap Dan Tindakan Gus Dur Dalam Buku 'Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita,'" *Jurnal Penelitian Agama* 17, no. 2 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.24090/jpa.v17i2.2016.pp272-289>.

Gus Dur raised was against authoritarianism, both in political and religious contexts. This statement shows that Gus Dur sees a parallelism between political authoritarianism and religious dogmatism, both potentially equally oppressive.³¹

In the context of post-New Order Indonesia, Gus Dur highlighted how the legacy of authoritarianism still overshadowed the life of the nation. He criticized the tendency of political elites to manipulate religious and ethnic sentiments for the sake of power. Unequivocally, this criticism shows Gus Dur's sensitivity to contemporary political dynamics and how they impact people's lives. Furthermore, Gus Dur identified structural injustices in the prevailing economic and social systems. He criticized development policies that often ignored the interests of small communities and minority groups.³² This criticism reflected Gus Dur's commitment to the principles of social justice at the core of liberation theology.

In the religious context, Gus Dur strongly criticized the tendency of some groups to monopolize the truth and impose a single interpretation of religious teachings. This criticism shows how Gus Dur sees the potential for oppression even in religious institutions and practices. Interestingly, Gus Dur did not stop at mere criticism. He also offered a perspective on how religion, especially Islam, can be a liberating force against structural oppression. He argued that universal Islamic values such as justice, equality, and siding with the oppressed must be the foundation of the struggle against injustice.³³

In the context of plural Indonesia, Gus Dur emphasized the importance of solidarity across religions and ethnicities in fighting oppression. He wrote, "The struggle against injustice is not the

³¹ T R Hidayati, "KH Abdurrahman Wahid's (Gus Dur) Principle Ideology And Post-National Tragedy Multicultural Education Building: An Educational System Perspective," *International Journal of Educational Research* \&Social ..., 2023, <https://ijersec.org/index.php/go/article/download/620/594>.

³² Ahmad Suaedy, "Gus Dur, Islam Nusantara Dan Kewarganegaraan Bineka, Penyelesaian Konflik Aceh Dan Papua 1999-2001," 2018. 121

³³ masyhud, "Pluralisme: Studi Atas Pemikiran, Sikap Dan Tindakan Gus Dur Dalam Buku 'Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita.'"

monopoly of one religion or group. It is the shared responsibility of all elements of society." This view reflects Gus Dur's inclusive and cross-cutting understanding of socio-political issues.³⁴ Gus Dur's criticism of oppressive structures also included aspects of culture and tradition. He invited the review of discriminatory cultural practices, especially against women and minority groups. This shows Gus Dur's awareness of the complexity of sources of oppression that do not only come from formal political structures. In analyzing Gus Dur's critiques, it is important to understand the historical and socio-political context in which he wrote. Post-reform Indonesia was undergoing a democratic transition that was not easy. Tensions between democratic values and authoritarian tendencies inherited from the New Order were still strong. It was in this context that Gus Dur's criticisms became very relevant and challenged the status quo. What is no less distinctive in conveying his criticism. He often used humor and paradox to satirize practices that he considered oppressive. For example, he once wrote, "There are people who are very diligent in praying but do not hesitate to cheat in business. This is not religious devotion, but spiritual sport."³⁵ This style of language made his criticisms sharp but still easy to digest by various groups. Gus Dur's criticisms of oppressive structures were not only destructive, but also constructive. He always offered alternatives and solutions. For example, in criticizing the elitist education system, he proposed a more inclusive education model based on local wisdom. Education should liberate, not shackle the mind.³⁶

³⁴ Raha Bistara and Farkhan Fuady, "The Islam Wasathiyah of KH. Abdurrahman Wahid in the Islamic Political Arena," *Journal of Islamic Civilization* 4, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.33086/jic.v4i2.3611>.

³⁵ J Ahmad, "PRESIDENTIAL DECREE AS THE NORM IN LEGAL POLITICS (A Comparative of the Presidential Decree in Tunisia and Indonesia During Soekarno and Abdurrahman Wahid)," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum Dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 21, no. 2 (2021): 163–81, <https://doi.org/10.30631/alrisalah.v21i2.897>.

³⁶ Hidayati, "KH Abdurrahman Wahid's (Gus Dur) Principle Ideology And Post-National Tragedy Multicultural Education Building: An Educational System Perspective."

Overall, Gus Dur's critique of oppressive social and political structures shows the depth of his analysis of the root causes of problems in society. He not only identified symptoms but also explored the structural causes of various forms of oppression.³⁷ Moreover, his criticisms were always based on a vision of a more just and humane society, where religion became a liberating force, not a shackle. Gus Dur's thinking in this regard is an important foundation for the development of liberation theology in the Indonesian context. He has provided a conceptual and praxis framework for how religious values can be operationalized in the struggle against structural injustice.³⁸ This intellectual legacy continues to be relevant and inspiring to a new generation of Muslim activists and thinkers in Indonesia in their efforts to realize a more just society free from oppression.

When compared to other progressive Muslim thinkers such as Fazlur Rahman and Hassan Hanafi, Gus Dur's liberation theology has its own uniqueness. If Rahman emphasizes methodological renewal in the interpretation of the Quran, and Hanafi focuses on reconstructing the Islamic tradition for liberation, Gus Dur takes a more praxis-oriented and contextual approach.³⁹ Unlike Ali Shari'ati, who developed liberation theology with revolutionary nuances in Iran, or Asghar Ali Engineer, who focused on the liberation of the oppressed in India, Gus Dur developed a more accommodating and dialogical model of liberation theology, which is in line with Indonesia's socio-

³⁷ T Hamami, "Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama Education: Two Main Pillars of National Education in Indonesia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 18, no. 2 (2021): 307–30, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2021.182-06>.

³⁸ M I Tarmizi, "Reconstruction Of Accounting Education In Muhammadiyah Higher Education Based On K.H Ahmaddahlan'S Educational Thought," *Academy of Accounting and Financial Studies Journal* 25 (2021): 1–21, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?partnerID=HzOxMe3b%5C&scopusid=85115745354%5C&origin=inward>.

³⁹ Adi Candra Wirinata and Thoriq Ad Dakhil, "Status Ontologis Tuhan Dalam Teologi Pembebasan Hassan Hanafi," *Refleksi Jurnal Filsafat Dan Pemikiran Islam* 23, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.14421/ref.v23i2.3974>.

cultural complexity.⁴⁰ This approach is similar to the liberation theology developed by Farid Esack in South Africa, although the context of the struggle is different.⁴¹ Gus Dur's uniqueness lies in his ability to integrate traditional pesantren values with modern thought, while bridging various social and religious groups in the struggle against injustice.

Gus Dur's liberation theology thinking has significant implications for the future of Islamic thought and practice. First, it offers a new model for how Islam can play an active role in contemporary issues such as democracy, human rights, and social justice without losing its traditional roots. Second, his inclusive and dialogical approach provides a valuable framework for addressing the polarization and identity-based conflicts that are increasingly surfacing in the digital age. Thirdly, his thoughts on Islamic indigenization and interfaith dialogue can be an important guide in facing the challenges of globalism and religious extremism. At a practical level, Gus Dur's intellectual legacy has inspired a new generation of Muslim activists to develop social movements that integrate spirituality with social action.⁴² His framework is also relevant for the development of more progressive Islamic education and community empowerment based on inclusive religious values.

Discussion

Reinterpretation of Religious Text for Liberation

Gus Dur demonstrated his expertise in reinterpreting religious texts for liberation purposes. This was not just an intellectual exercise for Gus Dur, but a serious attempt to build a

⁴⁰ N Ataulla, "Islam, Peace and Religious Pluralism: An Analysis of the Works of Asghar Ali Engineer," *Human Rights* 14, no. 2 (2019): 109–20, <https://doi.org/10.22096/hr.2020.121463.1202>.

⁴¹ W I Muhammad, "The Quran and Muslim Minority Scholar's Perspective: A Comparative Study of Abdullah Saeed and Farid Esack," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 23, no. 2 (2022): 347–72, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v23i2.3277>.

⁴² C Kersten, "Contemporary Thought in the Muslim World: Trends, Themes, and Issues," *Contemporary Thought in the Muslim World: Trends, Themes, and Issues*, 2019, 1–218, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203740255>.

theological foundation for the struggle against injustice. Gus Dur began by criticizing the rigid textualist approach to understanding the Qur'an and Hadith. In interpreting Qur'anic verses, Gus Dur always emphasized historical context and contemporary relevance.⁴³ For example, when discussing a verse about justice, he did not stop at the literal meaning, but linked it to actual issues such as economic inequality and discrimination. Gus Dur also invited us to understand the Hadith critically and contextually. He reminded us that many Hadith were narrated in a particular socio-political context, and therefore need to be interpreted in light of changing times. "The Prophet Muhammad was a liberator in his time. Our task is to continue that spirit of liberation in our context today."⁴⁴ Interestingly, Gus Dur did not hesitate to criticize classical interpretations that he considered no longer relevant or even counterproductive to the struggle for humanity.

In the context of plural Indonesia, Gus Dur interpreted verses about diversity in an inclusive way. He cited the verse "*li ta'arafu*" (that you may know each other) as a theological basis for building interfaith dialogue and cooperation.⁴⁵ Gus Dur also gave new interpretations to classical concepts in Islam. For example, he reinterpreted the concept of 'jihad' not as a physical war, but as a struggle against injustice and ignorance. "The greatest jihad of our time is against poverty and ignorance. This kind of interpretation gives new dimensions to concepts that are often misunderstood.

In discussing controversial issues such as the position of women in Islam, Gus Dur did not hesitate to challenge mainstream interpretations that tend to be patriarchal. He invites you to reread

⁴³ N Franklin, "Gus Dur's Enduring Legacy: Accruing Religious Merit in the Afterlife," *Politics and Governance* 12 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7874>.

⁴⁴ F Khasanah, "Contesting Islamic Spirit And Islamic Formalization: Gus Dur Perspectives," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic ...*, 2020, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f027/bcc08b41005f878d4d82f795702372ffdd50a.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Saiful Hadi, "Social Construction Of Santri Based On Education Of Tasawuf Values In Tarbiyatul Mu ' Allimien Al-Islamiah Al-Amien Prenduan Sumenep," no. November (2023): 889–900, <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v12i04.7003>.

verses about women from the perspective of gender equality. Gus Dur also used a unique approach in interpreting legal verses. He emphasized that the main purpose of Sharia is human benefit, not rigid application of the law. Islamic law must be applied by considering context and benefit. Not the other way around, imposing the law without regard to its impact on society. Notably, Gus Dur always connects the interpretation of texts with social reality. He did not let interpretation become an abstract discourse, but always linked it to real problems faced by society.⁴⁶ For example, when discussing verses about leadership, he criticized corrupt and oppressive political practices. Gus Dur also invites us to understand the stories in the Qur'an not just as historical narratives, but as inspiration for contemporary struggles. He interpreted the stories of the prophets as examples of the struggle against oppression in their respective times.

In addition, Gus Dur interpreted verses about interfaith relations in an inclusive way. He quoted the verse "*lakum dinukum waliyadin*" (for you your religion, for me my religion) not as a separator, but as a basis for mutual respect in diversity. Islam teaches us to compete in goodness, not to blame each other for differences. Gus Dur also invites us to revisit the concept of '*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*' in a broader perspective. For him, this is not just a matter of ritual or individual morality, but a call to engage in socio-political struggles. "True *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* is to fight structural injustice, not just taking care of other people's personal affairs. Interestingly, Gus Dur often used humor and analogies in his interpretations. This made his deep thoughts easier to digest. This way of delivery makes the liberation messages in his interpretations easier to remember and understand.

Gus Dur's intellectual trail shows how the reinterpretation of religious texts can be a powerful instrument of social criticism. Through progressive readings of Islamic sources, he presents a hermeneutical model that places the social context as the basis for interpretation. In-depth analysis of his works reveals that pluralism is not just a concept of tolerance, but a fundamental

⁴⁶ A Wahid and I A Islamku, "Islam Kita, Cetakan II," Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2006. 65

religious epistemology. Gus Dur succeeded in transforming religious understanding from a normative-scriptural approach to a liberating contextual-critical approach. The construction of his thought shows that religion is actually an instrument of liberation, not a tool of repression. In this context, the liberation theology he built does not merely criticize the existing social structure, but offers a paradigmatic alternative in understanding inter-religious relations.

Overall, Gus Dur's reinterpretation of religious texts shows a serious attempt to make religion a liberating force. He managed to connect classical insights with contemporary issues, giving new relevance to sacred texts. Gus Dur's approach not only enriched the discourse of liberation theology in Islam but also inspired a new generation of Muslim thinkers to continue to re-examine religious understanding in the context of humanitarian struggles.

Pluralism and Inclusivism as the Foundation of Liberation Theology

In analyzing Gus Dur's thoughts on liberation theology, we cannot ignore the central role of the concepts of pluralism and inclusivism in the construction of his thought. The book "My Islam, Your Islam, Our Islam" is clear evidence of how Gus Dur places these two concepts as important foundations in building a liberation theology that is contextual to Indonesian reality. Pluralism and inclusivism are not just empty slogans for Gus Dur, but fundamental principles that color all his thoughts about religion, society, and the state. Gus Dur understood pluralism not just as a fact of diversity, but rather as an active attitude in appreciating and celebrating differences. Pluralism is not just recognizing diversity, but also actively engaging in that diversity.⁴⁷ This understanding is important in the context of a pluralistic Indonesia, where diversity is often seen as a threat rather than a wealth. Gus Dur saw pluralism as the key to building solidarity across identity boundaries, which is indispensable in the

⁴⁷ Iswahyudi Iswahyudi, "Pluralisme Islam Pribumi (Melacak Argumen-Argumen Abdurrahman Wahid Tentang Pluralisme Islam Di Indonesia)" 3 (2016): 376.

struggle against structural injustice. In the context of liberation theology, pluralism becomes the foundation for building an inclusive and cross-sectoral liberation movement.

Furthermore, Gus Dur linked pluralism to the concept of social justice. He argued that recognition of diversity is the first step towards creating a just society. This suggests that for Gus Dur, the struggle for pluralism and the struggle for social justice are two sides of the same coin. In terms of liberation theology, this means that efforts to liberate humanity from oppression must begin by freeing the mind from narrow and exclusive views. Inclusivism in thought. Gus Dur manifested this in his open approach to various traditions of thought, both from within and outside Islam. He did not hesitate to take inspiration from non-Muslim thinkers or even spiritual traditions outside formal religions. This inclusive attitude allowed Gus Dur to enrich the concept of liberation theology in Islam with insights from various sources, making his thinking more comprehensive and universal.

Abdurrahman Wahid's liberation theology represents a fundamental transformation in Indonesian Islamic discourse, which transcends the conventional boundaries of religious interpretation. Through his progressive perspective, Gus Dur succeeded in deconstructing a rigid and exclusive religious paradigm, opening a more inclusive and democratic space for dialogue. A comparative study with the thought of Latin American liberation theologians shows that Gus Dur's contribution is not merely adopting a theory, but contextualizing the concept of liberation theology in Indonesia's socio-religious landscape.⁴⁸ The dialogical approach he developed was able to overcome the dichotomy between theological and practical dimensions, presenting a model of religiosity that rests on the principle of universal humanity. In this context, Gus Dur's liberation theology is not just an intellectual discourse, but a social praxis that dismantles oppressive and discriminatory power structures.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ siti Nurhidayah, *Konsep Khilafah Dalam Pandangan Taqiuddin An-Nabhani Dan Abdurrahman Wahid*, *SELL Journal*, vol. 5, 2020.

⁴⁹ Moh. Arif Afandi, *Teologi Pembebasan Emha Ainun Nadjib*, Tesis, 2019.

In the context of liberation struggle, inclusivism is manifested in his view that social movements should not be trapped in religious or ideological barriers.⁵⁰ It calls for building solidarity that transcends primordial boundaries. This is important in the Indonesian context where socio-political issues are often polarized based on religious or ethnic identity. Gus Dur saw that true liberation was only possible if we were able to build solidarity that was inclusive and cross-border. Gus Dur's views on pluralism and inclusivism are also reflected in his critique of religious exclusivism. He consistently opposes absolute truth claims that tend to give rise to intolerant attitudes. In the context of liberation theology, this means that liberation must start from liberating dogmatic and closed ways of thinking. Gus Dur believed that an open and inclusive attitude would strengthen, not weaken, one's beliefs.⁵¹

Interestingly, Gus Dur did not see pluralism and inclusivism as threats to Islamic identity. Instead, he saw them as the embodiment of universal Islamic values. He often quoted Qur'anic verses about diversity as the divine will to show that pluralism is in line with Islamic teachings. In the context of liberation theology, this means that the struggle for justice and liberation is not solely the task of one religious community, but the shared responsibility of all humanity. Gus Dur's thoughts on pluralism and inclusivism as the foundation of liberation theology have important implications in the context of contemporary Indonesia. In the midst of growing conservatism and intolerance, Gus Dur's ideas offer an enlightening alternative. He showed that it is possible to cling to an Islamic identity while remaining open and inclusive of diversity.⁵² More than that, Gus Dur asserted that an inclusive and pluralist attitude is precisely the prerequisite for

⁵⁰ M M Dakake, "Myth and History in Islamic Thought: A Comparison with the Jewish and Christian Traditions," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 42 (2022): 279–98, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bcs.2022.0016>.

⁵¹ Muhammad Fajri, "Islam Nusantara," *Afkaruna* 14, no. 2 (2018): 267–71, <https://doi.org/10.18196/auij.2018.0091.267-270>.

⁵² Anis, "The Implementation of Abdurrahman Wahid's Vision in Leadership to Create a Pluralistic Muslim Society in Indonesia: A Sufism Perspective and Discourse Analysis."

realizing Islam's liberation mission in the context of a pluralistic society. He showed that religion, rather than being a source of conflict, can be a unifying force in the struggle against injustice. This idea has become very relevant in the midst of increasing tensions between communities in various parts of the world. Gus Dur offers a vision of religion that is progressive and humanist, which can be an inspiration for liberation movements in various contexts.

Liberation Praxis: From Theory to Action

Gus Dur not only offers a theological discourse on liberation, but also provides a concrete picture of how the theory can be implemented in real action. This is in line with the principle of liberation theology, which emphasizes the importance of praxis, a combination of reflection and action.

The community empowerment strategy initiated by Gus Dur was deeply rooted in the pesantren tradition but also open to modern ideas. He saw pesantren not only as religious educational institutions, but also as agents of social change.⁵³ Pesantren must become social laboratories, places where Islamic values are translated into concrete actions for the welfare of society. This statement reflects his vision of the role of religious institutions in community empowerment. Gus Dur criticized the tendency of some pesantren to focus too much on ritual aspects and ignore social issues. He encouraged pesantren to be actively involved in community development programs, ranging from education, economy, to health. It is not enough for santri to be good at reciting the Quran, but they must also be able to answer the challenges of the times.⁵⁴ This shows that Gus Dur understands empowerment is not just a transfer of knowledge, but also an increase in the capacity of the community to be independent and critical.

⁵³ Samsul Bahri, "Pemikiran KH. Abdurrahman Wahid Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren," *Eduagama: Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Sosial Keagamaan* 4, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.32923/edugama.v4i1.795>.

⁵⁴ A Qibtiyah, "Mapping of Muslims' Understandings on Gender Issues in Islam at Six Universities in Yogyakarta, Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah* 56, no. 2 (2018): 305–40, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2018.562.305-340>.

In addition, Gus Dur emphasized the importance of critical education as the foundation of empowerment. He criticized the education system that tends to be dogmatic and does not encourage creativity. Gus Dur encouraged the development of a curriculum that did not only focus on religious knowledge, but also included social sciences, science, and practical skills. This is in line with an understanding of liberation theology that sees the importance of a comprehensive understanding of social reality as a basis for action. In its implementation, Gus Dur encouraged pesantren and other Islamic educational institutions to open up to new ideas and modern teaching methods. He even advocated for the exchange of students and cooperation with educational institutions from different traditions. This shows that Gus Dur's empowerment strategy was not limited to the Muslim community, but was inclusive and cross-border.

In the context of economic empowerment, Gus Dur emphasized the importance of community-based economic development. He criticized *top-down* development models that often ignored the participation of local communities. Gus Dur encouraged the development of cooperatives, small and medium enterprises, and an Islamic economic system oriented towards collective welfare, not just individual profit. He saw this as a concrete manifestation of the principles of social justice in Islam. In its implementation, Gus Dur not only spoke, but was also directly involved in various populist economic initiatives. He *microfinance* programs, entrepreneurship training, and the development of community-based creative industries.⁵⁵ Gus Dur's contributions to Indonesia's socio-political movements show how he embodied the principles of liberation theology in a wider arena. As a public figure and former president, Gus Dur had a unique platform to champion his ideas. He was consistent in defending the rights of minorities and marginalized groups, even when it was politically unpopular. Gus Dur did not hesitate to go against the

⁵⁵M Anis, "The Implementation of Abdurrahman Wahid's Vision in Leadership to Create a Pluralistic Muslim Society in Indonesia: A Sufism Perspective and Discourse Analysis," *Advanced Science Letters* 22, no. 12 (2016): 4524–27, <https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2016.8209>

mainstream when he saw injustice. For example, he publicly defended the Ahmadiyah community and other minority groups facing discrimination.⁵⁶ This shows that for Gus Dur, liberation praxis is not just a discourse, but a commitment that must be realized in real action, even at the risk of losing political support.

In Indonesia's reform and democratization movement, Gus Dur's contribution was significant. He became one of the key figures in the transition from the New Order era to the Reformation era. Gus Dur saw democracy not just as a political system, but also as a manifestation of the values of justice and equality that Islam teaches. He was active in promoting dialog between groups, including between the military and civilians, to build a solid foundation for democracy. Gus Dur was also instrumental in pushing for reforms in various fields, including law, education and the economy. He emphasized the importance of the rule of law and the eradication of corruption as integral parts of the liberation struggle.⁵⁷ This demonstrates Gus Dur's comprehensive understanding of the link between individual liberation and structural transformation.

Not only that, Gus Dur's contribution to the socio-political movement was also seen in his efforts to build solidarity across religions and ethnicities. He was active in interfaith dialog forums and became a bridge between different communities. Gus Dur saw pluralism not only as a social fact, but also as a potential force for change. He encouraged cross-sectoral cooperation in dealing with common issues such as poverty, injustice and environmental destruction. This is in line with an understanding of liberation theology that emphasizes the importance of solidarity in the struggle against oppression. In practice, Gus Dur was often a mediator in communal conflicts and a calming voice in the midst

⁵⁶ Muhammad Purwanto et al., "Prophetic Leadership and Its Contribution to Building Religious Character," *AL-TANZIM: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (2022): 434–48, <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v6i2.3401>.

⁵⁷ Yusdani, "Islam and the Rearrangement of Society-State Relation in the Reformation Era of Indonesia," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 17, no. 1 (2019): 111–18, <https://doi.org/10.24035/IJIT.17.2020.174>.

of socio-political tensions.⁵⁸ He showed that liberation praxis requires the courage to transcend primordial barriers and build strategic alliances based on common values and goals.

Overall, the discussion of liberation praxis in Gus Dur's thought and action shows how liberation theology can be operationalized in specific contexts. The community empowerment strategies he initiated and his contributions to Indonesia's socio-political movements serve as concrete models of how theological reflection can be translated into transformative action. Gus Dur's holistic approach, encompassing educational, economic, political and cultural aspects, reflects his deep understanding of the complexity of the liberation struggle. Moreover, his consistency in fighting for the values of justice and humanity, even when confronted with power, demonstrated the intellectual and moral integrity at the core of liberation theology.⁵⁹ Gus Dur's legacy of thought and action continues to inspire and guide a new generation of Muslim activists and thinkers in their efforts to realize a more just and humane society.

The significance of Gus Dur's thought in the contemporary global context is increasingly evident with the increasing challenges of multiculturalism and dialogue between civilizations. His intellectual footprint proves that the liberation theology model he developed has universal relevance, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries.⁶⁰ Comparative analysis with global progressive thinkers shows that Gus Dur's contributions are not just local, but have international significance in deconstructing narratives of religious-based violence. His dialogical and inclusive approach offers a paradigmatic alternative in understanding

⁵⁸ A Suryana, "Indonesian Presidents and Communal Violence against Non-Mainstream Faiths," *South East Asia Research* 26, no. 2 (2018): 147–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967828X18769393>.

⁵⁹ Abd. Karim et al., "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Praktik Bobahasaan Mongondow (Teks Dan Makna Kearifan Lokal Berbagai Sikap Kebahasaan Dan Lirik Lagu)," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 19, no. 1 (2021): 103–40, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v19i1.905>.

⁶⁰ Rezza Maulana, "Memperingati Tahun Baru Cina Sambil Melestarikan Warisan: Pengalaman Komunitas Cina Di Yogyakarta," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 13, no. 1 (2015): 183–202.

interfaith relations in the global era. The liberation theology model he developed was able to transform religious understanding from an exclusive approach to a more humanist, dialogical and liberating approach.⁶¹ In this context, Gus Dur's intellectual legacy is not just a historical record, but a blueprint for a more dignified and just religious practice.

As the praxis implementation of Gus Dur's concept of liberation theology in the form of religious moderation practices in the Mongondow context provides a comparative perspective on Gus Dur's liberation theology thinking on pluralism and intercultural dialog. Just as Mongondow linguistic practices demonstrate tolerance and negotiation of meaning across identities, Gus Dur developed a theological framework that emphasizes the importance of dialogic communication between groups. These two contexts both show how differences can be bridged through inclusive cultural practices, where religion is not understood as a fortress of separation, but rather a space of encounter and social transformation.⁶²

In addition, the religious and social history of the old mosques in Langkat illustrates the dynamic evolution of Islamic practice that parallels Gus Dur's liberation theology. These old mosques are not just physical buildings, but social dialectical spaces that reflect the complex interactions between religious traditions and social contexts. Gus Dur saw the mosque as a center of social transformation, not just a place of ritual, which is in line with the historical perspective on socio-religious dynamics that continues to develop.⁶³

Finally, the Arab networks in Manado in the early twentieth century provide a concrete illustration of the complexities of

⁶¹ Dini, Monica, and Ratri, "The Tension of Religion-Tradition and the Ideas of Women's Liberation in 'Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood', a Novel By Fatima Mernissi."

⁶² Karim et al., "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Praktik Bobahasaan Mongondow (Teks Dan Makna Kearifan Lokal Berbagai Sikap Kebahasaan Dan Lirik Lagu)."

⁶³ Zaini Dahlan and Hasan Asari, "Sejarah Keagamaan Dan Sosial Masjid-Masjid Tua Di Langkat," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 18, no. 2 (2020): 333–64, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v18i2.850>.

identity and capitalism that Gus Dur was concerned with in his liberation theology. The study of Arabs in Manado shows how religious and economic identities interact with each other, creating a dynamic space for negotiation. Gus Dur saw this kind of phenomenon as evidence of the importance of contextual readings of religion, where identity is not understood essentialistically, but rather as an ever-changing social construction, requiring theological interpretations that are responsive to changing times.⁶⁴

Overall, the findings from the research on Gus Dur's liberation theology have significant practical implications in several areas. In the context of education, Gus Dur's thought can be integrated into the curriculum of modern Islamic education, particularly in Islamic boarding schools and universities, by emphasizing the importance of contextual understanding of religious texts and active engagement in contemporary social issues. An educational model inspired by Gus Dur's thought could develop learning modules that combine classical studies with analysis of modern social issues, encourage interfaith and cultural dialogue, and train students' critical thinking skills in dealing with social complexity. In the context of interfaith dialogue, Gus Dur's framework can serve as a guide for developing dialogue forums that are more substantive and oriented towards collective action, not just a formal exchange of ideas.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, in the realm of socio-political policy, Gus Dur's perspectives on pluralism and social justice can be a reference in developing public policies that are more inclusive and equitable, especially regarding issues such as minority protection, people's economic empowerment, and management of cultural diversity.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Muhammad Nur et al., "Arabs in Manado: Network, Capitalism and Identity in the Early Twentieth Century," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 20, no. 1 (2022): 59–88, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v20.i2.1015>.

⁶⁵ A Hidayat, "Konsep Pendidikan Islam Di Era Globalisasi: Studi Pemikiran KH. Abdurrahman Wahid," *Nusantara: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, 2023, <http://journal.rumahindonesia.org/index.php/njpi/article/view/158>.

⁶⁶ Hadi, "Social Construction Of Santri Based On Education Of Tasawuf Values In Tarbiyatul Mu ' Allimien Al-Islamiah Al-Amien Prenduan Sumenep."

Theoretically, Gus Dur's liberation theology thought makes a significant contribution to the development of progressive Islamic discourse. First, he succeeded in developing a distinctive model of liberation hermeneutics, which integrates classical tafsir methodology with contemporary social analysis, creating a more comprehensive approach to understanding religious texts. Secondly, his conceptualization of the 'indigenization of Islam' offers a new theoretical framework in understanding the relationship between the universality of Islam and the particularity of local cultures, overcoming the traditional dichotomy between orthodoxy and contextualization. Third, his approach to pluralism does not stop at the level of tolerance, but develops a theory of 'transformative pluralism' that sees diversity as an active basis for social change.⁶⁷ This theoretical contribution enriches the repertoire of progressive Islamic thought by offering a new paradigm that links spirituality with social activism, tradition with modernity, and universality with locality.

CONCLUSION

Gus Dur's concept of liberation theology has distinctive characteristics, combining Islamic tradition with modern insights on social justice. He emphasized the importance of contextualizing religious teachings in contemporary socio-political realities, especially in Indonesia. Gus Dur successfully adapted the concept of liberation theology, which originally developed in the Latin American Christian context, into Indonesian Islamic discourse in a creative and relevant way. Gus Dur's critique of oppressive social and political structures became the main pillar in his liberation theology thinking. He consistently criticized authoritarianism, structural injustice, and religious practices that tend to shackle. These criticisms were not only destructive, but also constructive, always accompanied by alternative offers and solutions.

In addition, Gus Dur offers a progressive and contextual

⁶⁷ W Quisay, "Locating 'Praxis' in Islamic Liberation Theology: God, Scripture, and the Problem of Suffering in Egyptian Prisons," *Religions* 14, no. 9 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14091085>.

reinterpretation of religious texts, emphasizing the importance of religious understanding that is responsive to contemporary humanitarian issues. He invites to read the Qur'an and Hadith with "humanitarian glasses", not just a textual-literal approach. Pluralism and inclusivism are important foundations in Gus Dur's liberation theology. He emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue and cooperation in the struggle against injustice, making liberation theology a common agenda that transcends religious boundaries. Gus Dur's thinking on liberation theology is not only theoretical, but also emphasizes the praxis aspect. He consistently linked theological reflection with concrete action to defend the oppressed and uphold justice.

This paper limits itself to a textual analysis of one of Gus Dur's works, "My Islam, Your Islam, Our Islam", which methodologically limits the ability to generalize the findings to a broader socio-religious context. The limitations of the interpretative qualitative approach present their own complexities in comprehensively exploring the dynamics of liberation theology thought developed, so this research is better understood as an initial effort in understanding Gus Dur's progressive thought construction, not as a definitive and final mapping of his intellectual contribution to contemporary Islamic discourse.

Finally, this article opens prospects for further development in several directions. First, a comparative study between Gus Dur's liberation theology thinking and other progressive Muslim thinkers in various parts of the world. Second, an article on the practical impact of Gus Dur's thought on social movements in Indonesia. Third, an in-depth study of the relevance of Gus Dur's thought in the context of contemporary global challenges such as the ecological crisis, global economic inequality, and religious radicalism.

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