

Tarbawi inclusivity in the qur'an: a thematic study of hamka and shihab's views

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Abstract: Amid the global challenges of inclusive education that emphasize equal access for all children, including those with special needs as affirmed by the UNESCO Salamanca Declaration (1994), Indonesia faces inequalities in multicultural Islamic schools regulated by Law No. 20 of 2003. Tarbawi verses of the Al-Quran, such as QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13 (equality and diversity), QS. Abasa [80]:1-10 (ethics in serving individuals with special needs), and QS. Al-Isra [17]:70 (universal human dignity), serve as the foundation for developing inclusive education. This research thematically analyzes these verses through Tafsir Al-Azhar by Buya Hamka, which highlights nationalist unity, and Tafsir Al-Mishbah by Quraish Shihab, which connects them to modern human rights. Employing a qualitative library study approach, primary data are obtained from the Al-Quran text and both tafsirs, while secondary data come from contemporary Islamic education literature. The analysis uses thematic tafsir (tafsir maudhui) to identify inclusive values and a comparative method to contrast Hamka's emphasis on internal morals with Shihab's extension to social-multicultural aspects. The results reveal social-ummah dimensions in Hamka and psychological-humanistic dimensions in Shihab, implying the development of holistic curricula, inclusive school policies, and diversity-based learning models to enrich contemporary Islamic education in addressing digital-era discrimination.

Keywords: Contemporary Islamic education, Hamka's tafsir, Inclusive education, Quraish Shihab's tafsir, Tarbawi verses of the Al-Quran.

Introduction

Inclusive education has emerged as a cornerstone of global educational reform, aiming to ensure equitable access and quality learning opportunities for all children, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or needs (Arifinsyah, Dalimunthe, dan Riza 2025). The UNESCO Salamanca Declaration of 1994 marked a pivotal moment in this movement, advocating for schools to serve all students, particularly those with special educational needs, by shifting from segregated systems to inclusive ones that foster diversity and mutual respect (Borba et al. 2024). This declaration, endorsed by representatives from 92 governments, emphasized that every child has a fundamental right to education in an environment that accommodates differences, promoting social integration and reducing stigma. Over the past three

decades, its principles have influenced policies worldwide, yet implementation remains uneven, especially in developing contexts where resource constraints and cultural barriers persist (Özdan 2023).

In Indonesia, the pursuit of inclusive education is enshrined in national legislation, notably Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which mandates equal access to education for all citizens, including those with disabilities (Summary 2003). This law aligns with the country's multicultural fabric, where Islamic schools such as madrasahs and pesantrens play a vital role in educating millions of students. However, these institutions often grapple with significant challenges in realizing true inclusivity. Studies highlight persistent inequalities, including inadequate infrastructure, teacher training deficits, and cultural attitudes that marginalize students with special needs. For

instance, in multicultural Islamic schools, issues like discrimination based on ethnicity, disability, or socioeconomic status undermine the goal of equitable learning. The digital era exacerbates these problems, with online platforms amplifying exclusion through cyberbullying and unequal access to technology, particularly for vulnerable groups. Despite regulatory frameworks, the integration of students with special needs into mainstream Islamic education settings remains limited, often resulting in dropout rates and unfulfilled potential.

At the heart of addressing these challenges lies the Al-Qur'an, which offers profound guidance on human dignity, equality, and ethical treatment. Key *tarbawi* verses those emphasizing education and moral development provide a theological foundation for inclusivity. For example, QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13 states, "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you". This verse underscores equality and diversity, rejecting hierarchies based on race, status, or ability, and promoting mutual recognition as a basis for social harmony. Similarly, QS. Abasa [80]:1-10 narrates the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) initial oversight of a blind man in favor of the elite, serving as a lesson in ethical conduct toward individuals with special needs, prioritizing compassion over superficial judgments. QS. Al-Isra [17]:70 further affirms universal human dignity, declaring that Allah has honored the children of Adam, granting them rights and responsibilities irrespective of differences. These verses collectively advocate for an educational ethos that values every individual, aligning seamlessly with modern inclusive principles (Idris 2025).

Indonesian Islamic scholarship has long engaged with these *tarbawi* verses to contextualize inclusivity within local realities. Buya Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, a seminal 20th-century exegesis, interprets such verses through the lens of nationalist unity, emphasizing internal moral cultivation and communal solidarity to build a cohesive *ummah*. Hamka, a prominent reformer, viewed Qur'anic teachings as tools for fostering patriotism and ethical behavior amid Indonesia's post-

independence struggles, linking diversity to national strength. In contrast, Quraish Shihab's *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* extends this discourse to contemporary human rights, connecting inclusivity to psychological and social dimensions that resonate with global standards. Shihab's thematic approach highlights humanistic values, such as empathy and justice, making the Qur'an relevant to modern issues like discrimination in diverse societies.

Thematic *tafsir* (*tafsir maudhui*), which analyzes verses by topic rather than sequentially, has gained prominence in contemporary Islamic education for extracting practical insights from the Qur'an. This method allows scholars to address current challenges, such as inclusivity in multicultural settings, by synthesizing related verses into cohesive frameworks. In Indonesia, where Islamic education influences policy and practice, such interpretations can bridge traditional teachings with progressive reforms, countering digital-era biases and promoting holistic development (Al-Ghazali 1992).

This research aims to conduct a thematic analysis of selected *tarbawi* verses through the perspectives of Hamka and Shihab, exploring their implications for inclusive education in Indonesian Islamic schools. By comparing their views, the study seeks to uncover dimensions of inclusivity that can inform curriculum design, policy, and pedagogical models, ultimately contributing to equitable and compassionate learning environments (El-mesawi 2015a).

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative library research approach, focusing on textual analysis of primary and secondary sources to explore *tarbawi* inclusivity in the Al-Qur'an. As a non-empirical investigation, no field study or physical study site is involved; instead, the research is conducted through desk-based examination of classical and contemporary Islamic texts. Data collection and analysis emphasize interpretive procedures to derive educational implications from selected verses.

Data collection

Primary data were sourced directly from the Al-Qur'an, specifically the tarbawi verses: QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13, QS. Abasa [80]:1-10, and QS. Al-Isra [17]:70. These verses were selected for their thematic relevance to equality, ethical treatment of diverse individuals, and universal human dignity, as foundational elements of inclusive education. Interpretations of these verses were extracted from two key tafsir works: Tafsir Al-Azhar by Buya Hamka (first published 1967-1968, 8 volumes) and Tafsir Al-Mishbah by M. Quraish Shihab (first published 2000-2002, 15 volumes). Relevant sections were identified by cross-referencing the verses in each tafsir's indexed commentary, focusing on discussions of social unity, moral ethics, and humanistic applications.

Secondary data comprised contemporary literature on Islamic education and inclusivity, including books, journal articles, and policy documents. Sources included works on Indonesian madrasah systems (e.g., Law No. 20 of 2003 on National Education), UNESCO reports on inclusive education, and scholarly analyses of tafsir maudhui. Data were gathered from academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and institutional repositories (e.g., UIN Imam Bonjol Padang library), ensuring at least 80% of references from peer-reviewed journals published within the last five years (2021-2025). A total of 25 sources were reviewed, with inclusion criteria limited to English and Indonesian publications addressing Qur'anic exegesis in educational contexts.

Thematic tafsir analysis (tafsir maudhui)

The analysis followed the tafsir maudhui method, a thematic approach that organizes Qur'anic verses by conceptual topics rather than sequential order, allowing for holistic interpretation relevant to contemporary issues (El-mesawi 2015b). This procedure began with familiarization: repeated reading of the selected verses and their tafsir commentaries to identify recurring motifs, such as equality (*musawa*), compassion (*rahmah*), and diversity (*ta'addud*) (Al-Ghazali 1992). Initial codes were generated manually, tagging phrases related to internal moral development (e.g., Hamka's emphasis on ummah solidarity) and external social

applications (e.g., Shihab's links to human rights) (El-mesawi 2015b).

Subsequent phases involved searching for patterns across the texts. For instance, QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13 was coded for "diversity as strength" in Hamka's nationalist lens and "multicultural justice" in Shihab's modern framework. This inductive process drew on Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis framework, adapted for textual data, to ensure researcher reflexivity in interpreting cultural contexts. Themes were refined iteratively, grouping codes into broader categories like "social-ummah dimensions" and "psychological-humanistic dimensions," while cross-verifying against secondary sources for contextual validity (AMRULTAH 1989).

Comparative analysis

A comparative method was applied to contrast the interpretations of Hamka and Shihab, highlighting methodological and substantive differences in their exegeses. This involved side-by-side textual comparison, structured as follows: (1) descriptive mapping of each scholar's commentary on the verses; (2) identification of convergences (e.g., shared emphasis on ethical inclusivity) and divergences (e.g., Hamka's internal-moral focus versus Shihab's socio-psychological extension) (Idris et al. 2025); and (3) evaluative synthesis to assess implications for Islamic education.

The procedure adhered to Gadamerian hermeneutics principles for inter-textual dialogue, ensuring balanced representation without bias toward one scholar. Differences were quantified qualitatively through thematic overlap matrices, noting Hamka's acculturation of Qur'anic themes with Indonesian nationalism (Kalikova dan Kusdavletov 2021) and Shihab's integration of global human rights discourses (Idris et al. 2025). This step incorporated secondary data to contextualize findings, such as linking interpretations to digital-era challenges in multicultural schools (Rofiah dan Dahlan 2025).

Data analysis

Data were analyzed qualitatively using content and thematic coding in NVivo software (version 14), facilitating pattern detection and visualization. The

process followed a six-phase reflexive thematic analysis: (1) data familiarization via immersion reading; (2) code generation (e.g., 150 initial codes from tafsir excerpts); (3) theme searching through mind-mapping; (4) theme review for coherence; (5) theme definition and naming (e.g., four core themes: equality, ethics, dignity, and application); and (6) reporting with illustrative quotes.

Reliability was ensured through triangulation (cross-verifying tafsir with secondary sources) and member-checking via peer review among Islamic studies experts. Ethical considerations included accurate representation of sources, avoiding anachronistic projections, and acknowledging interpretive subjectivity. The analysis yielded implications for curriculum development, such as holistic models integrating Hamka's moral unity with Shihab's multicultural empathy to address discrimination in Indonesian Islamic education.

Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis of the selected tarbawi verses—QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13, QS. Abasa [80]:1-10, and QS. Al-Isra [17]:70—through the lenses of Buya Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar and Quraish Shihab's Tafsir Al-Mishbah reveals distinct yet complementary dimensions of inclusivity in the Al-Qur'an. These interpretations highlight core values of equality, ethical compassion, and human dignity, which can be synthesized to address contemporary challenges in Indonesian Islamic education. The findings underscore Hamka's focus on internal moral and communal unity, contrasted with Shihab's emphasis on psychological and social-multicultural extensions, providing a robust framework for inclusive practices.

Inclusive Values in QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13: Equality and Diversity

The verse QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13, which declares the creation of humanity from diverse tribes to foster mutual knowledge and nobility based on righteousness, emerges as a foundational text for inclusivity. In Tafsir Al-Azhar, Hamka interprets this as a call for social-ummah cohesion, linking diversity to the strength of the Indonesian nation-state post-independence. He argues that tribal

differences are divine instruments for cooperation, not division, emphasizing internal moral piety (taqwa) as the true measure of worth, which binds the ummah in ethical solidarity. This perspective yields a theme of "unity in diversity" (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika), where inclusivity begins with personal righteousness to prevent social fragmentation (Putri, Vera, dan Vistonce 2023).

In contrast, Shihab's Tafsir Al-Mishbah extends this to modern multicultural justice, connecting the verse to human rights principles that reject discrimination based on race, ability, or status. He highlights the verse's rejection of ethnocentrism, advocating for active recognition of others' dignity in diverse societies, including educational settings where marginalized groups face exclusion. Thematic coding identified 12 instances of "diversity as opportunity" in Shihab's commentary, compared to Hamka's 8 on "moral unity," revealing a shift from inward communal focus to outward social equity (Awwad 2025). These interpretations collectively affirm that Qur'anic equality counters digital-era biases, such as algorithmic discrimination in online learning platforms, by promoting empathy-driven interactions (Idris et al. 2025).

Table 1. Comparative Themes in Interpretations of QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13

Aspect	Hamka's Interpretation (Tafsir Al-Azhar)	Shihab's Interpretation (Tafsir Al-Mishbah)
Core Value	Social-ummah unity through taqwa	Multicultural justice and human rights
Key Motif	Diversity for national solidarity	Recognition of others to combat prejudice
Educational Implication	Moral cultivation for communal harmony	Inclusive policies for diverse classrooms
Examples from Text	Links to Indonesian nationalism	Ties to global anti-discrimination norms

Ethical Treatment in QS. Abasa [80]:1-10: Compassion for Special Needs

QS. Abasa [80]:1-10, recounting the Prophet's (peace be upon him) redirection toward a blind seeker, underscores ethical priorities in human interactions. Hamka views this as a lesson in internal moral humility, critiquing elitism and urging educators to prioritize the spiritually needy over the materially privileged, fostering a classroom ethos of sincere guidance. His analysis, rooted in 20th-century reformism, identifies "compassion as moral duty," with 10 coded references to self-reflection as key to inclusive teaching, aligning with pesantren traditions that emphasize character over status (Alfiani dan Sulaiman 2022) (Idris 2025).

Shihab, however, interprets it through a psychological-humanistic lens, emphasizing empathy for individuals with disabilities as a reflection of divine mercy (*rahmah*) (Shihab 2002). He connects the narrative to modern special needs education, arguing that overlooking the vulnerable perpetuates injustice, and calls for adaptive pedagogies that honor each learner's potential. Coding revealed Shihab's 14 instances of "empathic inclusion" versus Hamka's 7 on "moral redirection," highlighting a progression from personal ethics to systemic accommodations. This contrast explains why Hamka's view suits character-building in traditional madrasahs, while Shihab's addresses contemporary issues like sensory impairments in digital-hybrid classrooms, where accessibility tools can embody Qur'anic compassion.

Universal Dignity in QS. Al-Isra [17]:70: Honoring All Humanity

The affirmation in QS. Al-Isra [17]:70 that Allah has honored humanity with intellect and authority positions dignity as inherent to all (Sadri 2025). Hamka frames this as a basis for ummah-wide respect, interpreting it as a mandate for ethical education that elevates the collective human spirit, drawing on nationalist ideals to combat colonial-era hierarchies. Themes of "dignity through faith" appear in 9 excerpts, focusing on internal empowerment to build resilient communities.

Shihab broadens this to universal human rights, linking it to psychological well-being and social inclusion, where dignity demands protection from

marginalization, including in multicultural schools facing ethnic tensions. His 11 codes on "holistic honor" extend Hamka's internal focus to external advocacy, such as anti-bullying policies. Together, these views reveal how Qur'anic dignity mitigates digital discrimination, like online exclusion of minority students, by integrating moral and social safeguards (Arifinsyah et al. 2025).

Comparative Synthesis and Implications for Islamic Education

The comparative analysis demonstrates a 70% thematic overlap between Hamka and Shihab, with divergences rooted in historical contexts: Hamka's post-colonial nationalism prioritizes internal morals for ummah stability, while Shihab's contemporary humanism extends to multicultural and psychological dimensions, influenced by global discourses. This synthesis yields a dual-layered inclusivity model—moral-internal (Hamka) and social-external (Shihab)—explaining why traditional Islamic education often excels in character formation but lags in accommodating special needs, as evidenced by Indonesian madrasah surveys showing 40% infrastructure gaps (Margareta, Aprison, dan Charles 2024).

These findings causally link Qur'anic tarbawi principles to practical reforms: Hamka's unity theme drives holistic curricula that instill *taqwa* to foster peer support, reducing internal biases, while Shihab's empathy dimension informs diversity-based models, such as adaptive tech integration under Law No. 20 of 2003, to counter digital-era exclusion. The causal mechanism lies in tafsir *maudhui's* ability to contextualize timeless verses, enabling educators to develop policies that honor dignity (Al-Isra), prioritize ethics (Abasa), and celebrate diversity (Al-Hujurat). In Indonesia's multicultural landscape, this approach not only aligns with UNESCO's inclusive agenda but also enriches Islamic education by bridging *turats* (heritage) with modern challenges, ultimately cultivating resilient, compassionate learners (Idris et al. 2024). Limitations include interpretive subjectivity, mitigated by triangulation, suggesting future empirical studies in madrasah settings for validation.

Conclusions

This thematic study of tarbawi inclusivity in the Al-Qur'an, through the comparative analysis of Buya Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar and Quraish Shihab's Tafsir Al-Mishbah, reveals a rich and dynamic framework for inclusive education. Hamka's interpretations emphasize internal moral development and communal solidarity, fostering a sense of shared identity and ethical responsibility within the ummah. Shihab, building upon this foundation, extends inclusivity to encompass social-multicultural dimensions, human rights, and psychological well-being, making the Qur'anic message deeply relevant to contemporary challenges such as digital discrimination and the needs of diverse learners. The synthesis of these perspectives provides a comprehensive model for inclusive education in Indonesian Islamic schools, one that integrates character building with equitable access and empathetic engagement. This research concludes that by leveraging the profound guidance of tarbawi verses as interpreted by these two influential scholars, Islamic education can develop holistic curricula, implement inclusive policies, and foster diversity-based learning models that effectively address the complexities of the modern era, ensuring every student is recognized, respected, and empowered.

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