Research Article

METHODS AND PATTERNS OF THINKING IN THE AL-MANAR TAFSIR

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the history, methods, patterns of thought, relevance, and contributions of contemporary tafsir scholarship. Using descriptive-critical analysis, this study maps the foundations of Abduh and Ridha's thinking, which emphasizes rationality, social morality, and the principle of maslahah as the basis for interpreting the Qur'an. The results of the study show that al-Manār uses a tahlīlī (analytical) method with an adabī-ijtimā'ī (literary-social) nuance, focusing on the purification of faith, criticism of taklid (blind imitation without reason), and encouragement to revive ijtihad. Abduh prioritized reason as an important instrument in understanding revelation, while Ridha expanded the project with a socio-political movement dimension oriented towards the revival of the ummah. Critically, al-Manār has great significance in building bridges between tradition and modernity, offering an integrative and adaptive model of interpretation. The uniqueness of the methods and style of thought in Tafsir Al-Manar lies in its rational-reformative approach, which combines the text of the Qur'an with reason, science, and social reality to answer the problems of modern communities. As a result, this interpretation encourages a dynamic, contextual understanding of Islam that is oriented towards social renewal and the advancement of civilization.

Keywords: Al-Manar Interpretation, Analytical Interpretation Method, Literary-Social Style, Rationality, Renewal of Islamic Thought

INTRODUCTION

Interpretation is one of the efforts to understand the verses of the Qur'an as intended by Allah. Each interpretation has a different method and style of thinking in interpreting the meaning of verses (Sumber et al., n.d.). Interpretation never arises in a vacuum; it is always influenced by the interpreter's life experiences, social conditions, and thinking paradigm. It is also influenced by the environment, school of thought, and field of knowledge mastered by the interpreter. One tafsir book that is interesting to study in terms of its method and style of thinking is Tafsir al-Manar, because this work occupies a strategic position in the history of the development of modern tafsir (Abdurrahman et al., 2025).

The interpretation compiled by Muhammad Abduh and continued by his student, Rasyid Ridha, is considered a milestone in the revival of reformist interpretation in the modern Islamic world (Ilmiah & Pendidikan, 2024). According to Harun, Abduh was a pioneer of the Islamic reform movement that sought to combine reason and revelation in understanding Islamic teachings (Abduh, 2024). This view shows that Tafsir al-Manar not only interprets the verses of the Qur'an textually, but also seeks to present a contextual and rational understanding in accordance with the needs of the times.

Tafsir al-Manar shows a paradigm shift from classical exegesis to modern exegesis and pays great attention to social aspects (Mikraj et al., 2025). Thus, discussing its methods and patterns of thought will open up insights into how exegesis can play an active role in shaping the social and moral consciousness of Muslims. In the context of the modern world, which is fraught with moral and intellectual crises, the spirit of renewal of Abduh and Ridha is very important to be revived because the revival of Muslims will not be possible without returning to the Qur'an in a rational and contextual manner (No et al., 2024). Therefore, it is imperative to understand the methods and patterns of thought in Tafsir al-Manar not merely as a theoretical study, but also as a practical effort to rediscover Qur'anic values as guidelines for building an advanced and civilized Islamic civilization.

Similar research has been conducted previously by other authors, including Ahmad Tholabi Kharlie with the title Examining the Contemporary Dimensions of Al-Manar Exegesis by Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Rasyid Ridha, and Ahmad Tholabi Kharlie entitled The Methods of Interpretation of Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Rasyîd Ridhâ in Tafsîr Al-Manâr, as well as research by Fitri Kartika entitled "Tafsir Al-Manar by Muhammad Rasyid Ridha (Biography, Sources, Methods, Styles, Examples of Interpretation)." Upon further investigation, previous research also discussed Rasyid Ridha's Tafsir Al-Manar in its entirety.

However, in the author's research, there are differences in terms of method, style of thought, critical analysis of this interpretation, and its influence on the renewal of Islamic thought what is the history and background of Tafsir Al-Manar, and what is the interpretation method used in Tafsir Al-Manar, and what is the style of thinking in Tafsir Al-Manar, and what is the critical analysis of Tafsir al-Manar in the modern context.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses library research, which is research that uses the literature study method to collect data, review various literature, and analyze topics relevant to the study by utilizing sources such as books, journals, dictionaries, documents, magazines, and other sources related to this study (Amelia & Nursanti, 2022). This library research was conducted in two stages.

First, collecting various types of data relevant to the research. Second, analyzing the collected data using descriptive-analytical analysis, which involves analyzing and drawing conclusions from the readings used as references while also looking at the relevant relationships with the research (Inovasi & Kejuruan, 2021)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History and Background of Al-Manar Interpretation

Al-Manar Interpretation is the result of the thoughts of two great figures in the Islamic reform movement, namely Sheikh Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) and his student and successor Sheikh Rasyid Ridha (1865–1935). Both are known as pioneers of the Islamic modernism movement, which sought to return Muslims to the purity of the teachings of the Qur'an and common sense in understanding revelation (Jaya & Gelista, 2025). Muhammad Abduh was born in 1849 in Upper Egypt (Mahallat Nasr, Buhaira Province). He came from a simple farming family. From a young age, Abduh studied the Qur'an in his village, then continued his education at Al-Azhar University in Cairo.

Abduh was active in the Islamic reform movement that opposed Western colonialism and the stagnation of Islamic thought (Fadhilah & Suyanta, 2025). He was exiled by the Egyptian government for his political activities in support of the resistance against Britain. After his return, he was appointed Mufti of Egypt (1899–1905), the highest religious position in the country. From this position, Abduh fought for Islamic legal reform, modern education, and the opening of ijtihad so that Islam would be in line with the demands of the times (Rezki & Hulawa, 2025).

Muhammad Abduh merupakan murid dari Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1838–1897), seorang tokoh pan-Islamisme yang menyerukan kebangkitan umat Islam, dengan demikian tafsir Al-Manar tidak bisa dilepaskan dari pemikiran Jamaluddin al-afgani, sebagai gurunya M. Abduh. Setelah wafat M. Abduh penafsirannya dilanjutkan oleh muridnya, Rasyid Ridha, yang kemudian membukukan hasil pelajaran gurunya ke dalam karya monumental *Tafsir Al-Manar* (Muhammad et al., 2024). Muhammad Rasyid Ridha lahir pada 1865 di Qalamun, dekat Tripoli, Lebanon (waktu itu bagian dari Kekaisaran Utsmani). Ia berasal dari keluarga ulama. Sejak muda ia menghafal Al-Qur'an dan mempelajari hadis serta ilmu bahasa Arab. Ia terinspirasi oleh gagasan pembaruan Muhammad Abduh dan gurunya yang lebih tua, Jamaluddin al-Afghani (Septiana & Rofiah, n.d.).

Muhammad Abduh was a student of Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1838–1897), a pan-Islamist figure who called for the revival of Islam. Thus, the Al-Manar interpretation cannot be separated from the thoughts of Jamaluddin al-Afghani, as M. Abduh's teacher. After M. Abduh's death, his interpretation was continued by his student, Rasyid Ridha, who then compiled his teacher's lessons into the monumental work Tafsir Al-Manar (Muhammad et al., 2024). Muhammad Rasyid Ridha was born in 1865 in Qalamun, near Tripoli, Lebanon (at that time part of the Ottoman Empire). He came from a family of scholars. From a young age, he memorized the Qur'an and studied hadith and Arabic language. He was inspired by the reformist ideas of Muhammad Abduh and his older teacher, Jamaluddin al-Afghani (Septiana & Rofiah, n.d.).

Ridha came to Cairo in 1897 to study directly under Abduh. He then became Abduh's student, successor, and propagator of his ideas. After Abduh's death, Ridha continued and developed his teacher's teachings, particularly through Al-Manar Magazine and Tafsir al-Manar, emphasizing the importance of ijtihad and social reform (Karya & Abduh, n.d.). As explained by Harun Nasution, Rashid Ridha succeeded in making Tafsir Al-Manar a vehicle for systematic and rational Islamic reform, bridging the gap between revelatory texts and modern social reality.

The birth of Tafsir Al-Manar cannot be separated from the socio-political context of the Islamic world at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. At that time, Egypt and the Islamic world were in a state of decline under the influence of Western colonialism and an intellectual crisis that had struck the Muslim community. According to Fazlur Rahman, the Islamic modernist movement of that era emerged as a reaction to stagnant thinking and colonial pressure that caused Muslims to lose confidence (J. P. Islam, 2023). In such conditions, reformers such as Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rasyid Ridha emerged, seeking to restore the dynamism of Islamic thought so that it could respond to the challenges of the modern era.

Rasyid Ridha, through the magazine Al-Manar (published since 1898), continued this idea and made it a means of reformist preaching. The interpretation that emerged from Abduh's collection of writings and lectures in the magazine was named Tafsir Al-Manar (Fakultas et al., n.d.). The main goal of compiling Tafsir Al-Manar was to raise awareness among Muslims to return to the pure and contextual teachings of the Qur'an, rather than simply understanding the text literally.

Abduh believed that the Quran is a book of guidance for all aspects of human life, not just a text for religious rituals (Fikri & Digdayani, 2025). According to M. Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Manar not only explains the meaning of verses but also fosters a spirit of renewal and instills the belief that Islam can meet the challenges of the modern era. Thus, this commentary is not merely a work of religious scholarship but also a manifestation of the intellectual and spiritual struggle to reform Islamic thought.

The division of roles and limits of interpretation in Tafsir Al-Manar between Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Rasyid Ridha is as follows (Fattah, n.d.):

1. Muhammad Abduh (teacher)

    Muhammad Abduh's contributions consisted of lectures and dictations of interpretation recorded by Rasyid Ridha. This section is known as the core of the Adabi Ijtima'i method of Tafsir Al-Manar. The final chapter of Abduh's interpretation is:

    a. Surah: Surah An-Nisa' (4th Surah)

    b. Verse: Up to approximately verse 125 or 126 of Surah An-Nisa'.

    c. Juz': This section covers up to Juz' 5.

    Muhammad Abduh died in 1905, so his exegetical lectures ceased at this point.

2. Muhammad Rasyid Ridha (student and compiler)

    Rasyid Ridha continued, compiled, and developed his own interpretations in Al-Manar magazine after his teacher's death. The final chapter of Ridha's interpretations is:

    a. Surah: Surah Yusuf (12th Surah)

    b. Verse: Up to approximately Verse 101 or 107 of Surah Yusuf.

    c. Juz: The completed Al-Manar commentary consists of 12 volumes (Juz 1 to Juz 12).

    Thus, Muhammad Abduh was the originator and contributor of material up to Surah An-Nisa' Verse 126. Muhammad Rasyid Ridha was the compiler, publisher and finisher of the commentary who continued writing up to Juz 12 (Surat Yusuf). The overall interpretation of Al-Manar was not completed because Rasyid Ridha died in 1935 AD before he could complete the interpretation of all 30 Juz of the Al-Qur'an.

The Interpretation Method of Tafsir Al-Manar

According to Prof. Dr. Sahiron Syamsuddin, the main characteristics of Tafsir al-Manar by Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha are its use of the tahlili (analytical) method with a rational (ʿaqli) and socio-contextual (ijtima'i) approach. However, he emphasized that this method of interpretation also demonstrates the embryo of the contextual hermeneutic method that is developing in contemporary tafsir. Abduh and Ridha in Tafsir al-Manar employ the tahlili method, but with a rational and contextual approach (September & Rouf, 2024). They

not only analyze the meaning of language but also interpret verses within the socio-political context of their time.

The tahlili method involves interpreting verse by verse sequentially according to the order of the Mushaf, taking into account the linguistic meaning, asbabun nuzul (prophetic revelation), legal content, and moral values (Penafsiran et al., 2025). However, according to Sahiron, Tafsir al-Manar is not merely descriptive, but rather analytical and reflective, as it is accompanied by logical analysis and criticism of religious traditions. Tafsir al-Manar does not stop at linguistic explanations, but interprets the content of the verses with sharp and argumentative reasoning.

In this method, each verse is examined from various aspects such as language, the reason for its revelation (asbābun nuzūl), the relationship between verses, and the moral and social messages contained therein (Dahlan et al., 2024). According to Manna' al-Qaththan, the taḥlīlī method is an attempt by an interpreter to explain the meanings of the Qur'an in depth by analyzing each word, structure, and context. Tafsir Al-Manar falls into this category, but is characterized by the use of rationality and modern social context as tools to understand the message of revelation (Mikraj et al., 2025). According to Ahmad Syalabi, Muhammad Abduh interpreted the Qur'an with a rational, scientific, and social reform-oriented style of thinking, without abandoning the basic principles of sharia. He revived the spirit of classical Islamic rationalism that had flourished during the golden age of Islamic civilization, so that the Qur'an could be understood contextually and applicably.

Thus, Abduh and Ridha used rational methods to assert that Islam is a religion that goes hand in hand with reason and the advancement of knowledge. Sahiron stated that Tafsir al-Manar attempted to connect the message of the verse to the social reality of Egyptian society, which was then colonized by the British and experiencing moral decline. Therefore, the method they used was not only textual analysis, but also an analysis of the social context of the community (contextual interpretation). Because the verse was not interpreted in a vacuum, but amidst the socio-political problems of the Muslim community, this is what makes it relevant to modern contextual interpretation.

The tahlili method used in the interpretation of Al-Manar has several characteristics and special features (Akbar, 2025):

1. Consideration of the asbabun nuzul (prophetic revelation), the relationship between verses, and social reality

   In interpreting verses, Abduh and Ridha always considered the asbabun nuzul (reasons for the revelation of verses) and the munasabah (relationships between verses and chapters). Both believed that the Quran cannot be understood in parts, but must be viewed as a thematic whole that integrates text and context. Rasyid Ridha, in the preamble to Tafsir Al-Manar, explains that interpretation of the Quran must begin with an understanding of the social situation of the people, because the messages of the Quran are dynamic and applicable. He wrote that the Quran was revealed to improve humanity and society, not simply to be read without understanding (Tafsir Al-Manar, Juz 1).

   This view is in line with the opinion of Quraish Shihab who stated that Tafsir Al-Manar is an interpretation that bridges between the text of revelation and social reality, so that the message of the Qur'an remains relevant in every era. Thus, Tafsir Al-Manar is not only philological or linguistic, but also has a strong social mission. For example, the interpretation of the letter An-Nisa' (4): 10; Indeed, those who unjustly devour the property of orphans, they truly swallow fire into their bellies and they will enter the blazing fire (hell).

   a. The reasons for the revelation of the verse;

      This verse was revealed in Arab society, particularly in Medina, after battles (such as Uhud) that left many widows and orphans. At that time, the property of orphans was often managed by their guardians, and many guardians exploited it, even taking it

fraudulently. The function of the reasons for the revelation: This consideration explains why this verse was revealed (to address the actual practice of injustice and exploitation) and provides the urgent context for why its threat was so severe. It indicates that the issue addressed by the verse was a very serious and systematic social evil at that time.

b. Inter-verse relationships (munasabah)

Internal Relationships of Surah An-Nisa': This verse is placed at the beginning of Surah An-Nisa', which is a surah that focuses heavily on family laws, women's rights, and the rights of the weak (including orphans). The preceding verse (4:2-3) speaks of the encouragement to marry orphans and the importance of being just in the distribution of wealth. This verse serves as a strong threat that serves as a logical conclusion to a series of laws and commands regarding the treatment of orphans and the fair distribution of inheritance. Function of Munasabah: This consideration demonstrates that the prohibition on consuming orphans' property is an integral part of the larger Islamic legal system of social justice and protection of the marginalized, not simply a stand-alone prohibition.

c. Social Reality (Ijtimāʻī Interpretation)

Contemporary Context: Modern commentators (such as those in al-Manār or other social commentaries) do not focus solely on the classical Arabic context. They apply the threat of this verse to contemporary social realities. Contextual Application: In the modern context, unjustly consuming the property of orphans is expanded to include:

1) Corruption and embezzlement of public funds (including social assistance or scholarship funds).
2) Exploitation of assets/land owned by waqf (Islamic endowments) or charitable institutions dedicated to public welfare (often involving orphans).
3) Abuse of power that harms the rights of vulnerable communities.

Social reality function: This consideration makes the verse relevant and adaptable throughout the ages. The threat of engulfing fire applies to any form of economic oppression targeting the powerless, regardless of whether they are guardians of orphans in the 7th century or corrupt public officials in the 21st century. By combining these three considerations, the interpretation is not only historically and textually accurate but also alive and serves as a moral critique and social ethical guide for Muslims in every era.

2. Avoid israiliyat and emphasize the rational values of the koran

One of the features of Tafsir Al-Manar is its tendency to avoid Israiliyat stories, namely narrations from Jewish and Christian traditions that often appear in classical tafsir without a strong basis.

a. Example verse: The story of Harut and Marut, Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 102; ...and they followed what the devils recited during the reign of Solomon. But Solomon was not an infidel, only the devils were infidel. They taught people magic and what was revealed to the two angels in Babylon, Harut and Marut.... Many classical commentaries, which draw from the Israiliyat sources (which originate from Jewish apocryphal narratives), interpret the story of Harut and Marut, that the angels in the heavens scorned humans for their sins. Allah then challenged them by sending two angels, Harut and Marut, to earth.

b. Angels commit sins: These two angels, after descending to earth in human form, were tempted and committed major sins, such as drinking khamr (liquor), committing adultery, and even murder.

c. Punishment: As punishment, they were hung upside down from a well in Babylon until the Day of Judgment, as a teaching about the dangers of lust.

d. Negative implications: This story is theologically problematic because: (a) Angels who were created without lust can commit major sins, (b) This damages the concept of ma'sum (protected from sin) which is believed in angels.

Ridha argues that this story is inconsistent with the position of angels in Islam, which are definitively holy, devout beings who have no desire to commit sin. This story is considered a myth imported from outside pure Islamic teachings. Accepted interpretation (role of teachers): Al-Manar interprets the role of Hārūt and Mārūt as teachers or examiners who teach magic (i.e., knowledge of magic) with the aim of warning people about the dangers of magic and how to avoid it. They were commanded to teach magic so that people could distinguish it from miracles and realize its danger. They always warn: Indeed, we are only a trial for you, do not be infidels. (Continued from Q.S. 2:102). At the same time, this interpretation is a purification of the Faith: With this interpretation, Ridha successfully maintains the sanctity of Islamic faith regarding angels and makes the text of the Qur'an as the main basis, rather than unverified narrations that logically contradict theological principles.

According to Hasan Hanafi, Tafsir Al-Manar is the cornerstone of the birth of modern tafsir, which separates itself from the traditional approach, which is full of Israiliyat stories and excessive symbolic interpretations. An example of the application of the rational taḥlīlī method in Tafsir Al-Manar can be seen in the interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 256 — Lā ikrāha fī ad-dīn (there is no compulsion in religion). Abduh interpreted this verse not only as a prohibition on forcing someone to convert to Islam, but also as a principle of freedom of thought and belief recognized by Islam. According to him, faith born of coercion has no spiritual value. He wrote that freedom of thought is a condition for the birth of true faith, because faith must be born of conviction, not pressure (Tafsir Al-Manar, Juz 3).

Thus, Tafsir Al-Manar's interpretive method is a rational-conceptual taḥlīlī grounded in text, reason, and social context. This work presents a dynamic, rational, and social face of Islam, making the Qur'an a source of inspiration for the advancement of the people and the renewal of civilization.

3. Purification and reform (islah) of the Islahiyyah (reformist)

Sahiron also explained that the al-Manar method was a reaction to the classical tafsir method, which was overly textual and full of Israiliyat narratives. Thus, the al-Manar method is purifying and reforming (islah) the previous tafsir tradition. The al-Manar method seeks to purify tafsir from Israiliyat influences and present a rational approach relevant to modern realities. Thus, it is clear that the method used by Al-Manar tafsir is Tahlili (analytical), interpreting verses sequentially with in-depth explanations using an ʿAqli (rational) approach, emphasizing the role of reason and logical argumentation, Ijtima'i (social-contextual), relevant to the realities of modern society and purifying in nature, and Islahiyyah (reformist), aimed at improving the understanding and behavior of the community.

For example, Al-Fatihah [1]: 5: Only You do we worship and only You do we ask for help). Purified Reality: the practice of tawassul (asking intermediaries) to deceased saints, excessive grave visits, and practices of Sufism that are considered deviant are increasingly widespread, leading to minor shirk (heresy). Al-Manār's approach: Al-Manār interpreted the verses of monotheism strictly and literally, emphasizing that there is no intermediary between the servant and God. They attacked the practice of tawassul and saint worship as a return to polytheism similar to the behavior of the Meccan polytheists. Purpose of Purification: Returning the people to pure monotheism and direct worship of Allah, removing all layers of tradition and superstition that are considered to hinder reason and faith.

The Thought Pattern of Tafsir Al-Manar (Adabī ijtimāʿī, Social and Community)

The Tafsir Al-Manar by Sheikh Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha is one of the modern commentaries that marks the emergence of a new paradigm in the study of Qurʾanic interpretation. This interpretation not only explains the meaning of the words and linguistic structure, but also seeks to explore the moral, social, and rational messages of the Qurʾan so that its teachings can be implemented in modern society (U. Islam & Islamabad, 2025). According to Ahmad von Denffer, the Tafsir Al-Manar embodies a spirit of renewal by emphasizing the relevance of the Qurʾan to human problems in every era. Based on its overall content and approach, scholars state that the Tafsir Al-Manar's primary characteristic is adabī ijtimāʿī (social and community).

The adabī ijtimāʿī model emphasizes moral values, education, and societal improvement based on the teachings of the Qurʾan. For Abduh and Ridha, the Qurʾan is not merely a holy book to be recited ritually, but a guide to social life aimed at shaping morally upright individuals and a civilized society (Arsad, 2025). According to Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Manar is oriented toward establishing an ideal Islamic society through moral education, social responsibility, and justice. Thus, this interpretation serves as a concrete example of an interpretation that connects revelation with the social life of the community.

This pattern is also evident in their interpretation of verses related to human rights and universal humanitarian values, such as gender justice, religious freedom, and the obligation to fulfill one's mandate. According to Sahiron, Abduh and Ridha used interpretation as a tool for social renewal (societal reform). They interpreted Quranic verses by linking them to real-life issues such as the decline of the community, education, justice, and colonialism (Rafsanjani et al., 2025). Sahiron writes that this interpretation aimed to raise awareness among the community about the importance of social morality and collective responsibility.

In addition, this interpretation of Al-Manar uses several approaches, including (History & Abduh, 2023):

1. Rationalist-modernism

    Rationalist-modernism stems from the belief that Islam is in line with reason and scientific progress. Muhammad Abduh believed that reason is a gift from God that should be used to understand revelation, not to oppose it. Abduh and Ridha rejected imitation and emphasized the importance of reason in understanding the Quran. According to Sahiron, this approach is characteristic of modern interpretation, which opens up space for ijtihad and scientific reasoning in understanding the text. Abduh and Ridha's thinking asserts that revelation and reason are not in conflict; both must exist in balance.

    Thus, the main objective of Tafsir al-Manar is to improve the condition of the Muslim community (Islah al-ummah). According to Sahiron, this interpretation is a form of reformist da'wah that calls the community to return to the pure values of the Qur'an. In Risālat al-Tawhid, Abduh emphasized that there can be no conflict between the truth of revelation and the truth of reason; if there appears to be a conflict, then human understanding of one of them is wrong. Rasyid Ridha continued his teacher's ideas by expanding the rational approach in interpreting scientific, social, and legal verses. He rejected literal understandings that do not correspond to empirical facts and encouraged the use of science in understanding the sunnatullah.

2. Islah (reformist)

    The reformist character of Tafsir Al-Manar is evident in its primary goal, namely the renewal of Islamic thought (islāh al-fikr al-Islāmī) and the revival of the Muslim community from the slump caused by colonialism and intellectual decline. For Abduh and Ridha, islah meant returning the community's understanding to the original values of the Qur'an and Sunnah, by reopening the door of ijtihad. They rejected blind imitation of the old schools of thought and called for the adaptation of Islamic law to the needs of the modern era. According to Harun Nasution, Tafsir Al-Manar is a reformist interpretation that seeks to

combine revelation and reason and rebuild the critical capacity of Muslims so that they can stand on equal footing with Western civilization.

In this context, the interpretation serves not only as a work of religious scholarship but also as a manifestation of a social and intellectual movement to revitalize the dynamics of Islamic civilization. Sahiron believes that this interpretation paved the way for a contextual hermeneutic approach, as it interprets verses in light of the socio-political conditions of Muslims during British colonial rule in Egypt. Abduh and Ridha can be considered pioneers of contextual interpretation because they read the sacred text with consideration for the social and political context of the community.

A Critical Analysis of Tafsir al-Manar in a Modern Context

Tafsir al-Manar has had a significant influence on the renewal of Islamic thought, but it has also been subject to criticism, particularly when confronted with developments in contemporary Islamic thought (Wahyudi & Zaenab, 2023). This criticism is not intended to reject the significance of this tafsir, but rather to assess its relevance amidst the intellectual and social dynamics of today's Muslim community. One of the main criticisms of Tafsir al-Manar lies in its strong rationalist tendencies.

As M. Quraish Shihab argues, Tafsir Al-Manar's primary strength lies in its rational and contextual approach. Abduh and Ridha strive to present the Quran as a living and relevant book, addressing human problems throughout the ages (Antara et al., 2021). Quraish Shihab states that Tafsir Al-Manar presents a dynamic and applicable perspective on the Quran to address the socio-political problems of modern Muslims.

1. Abduh and Ridha often interpreted Quranic verses with a rational approach to adapt Islamic teachings to modern logic. While this opened up space for ijtihad and reasoning, some scholars believe that this approach sometimes has the potential to neglect the spiritual and transcendental aspects of revelation. According to Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, reformist movements like al-Manar overemphasized rationality, thereby diminishing the symbolic and aesthetic meaning of the Quranic text. This critique suggests that excessive rationalism can distance interpretation from the richness of the Quran's symbolic and spiritual meaning.

   However, Sahiron emphasized that the spirit of Tafsir al-Manar, namely reading the revealed text within the social context of the community, remains highly relevant in the modern era. Abduh and Ridha's rational, contextual, and reformist principles can serve as the basis for a more open and interdisciplinary modern Qur'anic hermeneutics. Abduh and Ridha's ideas inspired the contextual tafsir approach now widely used in the Islamic world and Indonesia.

2. Furthermore, Tafsir al-Manar has also been criticized for being too tied to the colonial socio-political context in which it emerged. Some contemporary scholars believe that al-Manar's reformist message tended to be reactive to the conditions of Western colonialism, leading some of its interpretations to be apologetic. Fazlur Rahman writes that early reformist thought was often defensive of Western criticism, focusing more on defending Islam than on building a new, constructive theory. In this context, al-Manar can be considered a transitional interpretation, connecting the classical world with modernity, but not yet fully producing a solid new paradigm for Islamic thought.

   Nevertheless, according to Sahiron, Tafsir al-Manar made a significant contribution to the renewal of tafsir methodology. Abduh and Ridha introduced an interpretive model that linked the text of the Quran to the socio-political realities of Muslims who were then under the pressure of colonialism and the decline of thought. Abduh and Ridha succeeded in showing that the Quran does not only talk about worship, but also contains moral, social, and political messages relevant to societal renewal. Thus, this approach is the forerunner of modern contextual tafsir, because it interprets verses by considering the asbabun nuzul and

social reality, thus becoming an inspiration for contemporary tafsir in Indonesia and the Islamic world, such as the works of Quraish Shihab, Fazlur Rahman, and Muhammad Arkoun.

3. Criticism of gender roles: Ridha still maintains a traditional social structure that places men as primary leaders. According to Amina Wadud, early modern commentaries such as al-Manar have not fully interpreted the Qur'an from a just and contextual perspective of gender equality. This shows that although al-Manar is reformist, it still reflects the socio-historical limitations of its formative period. This view was later criticized by contemporary thinkers, including Sahiron Syamsuddin, because it shows that al-Manar's interpretation has not fully transcended the classical patriarchal paradigm.

    Despite Abduh and Ridha's rational and reformist efforts, they still upheld traditional social interpretations that placed men at the center of authority on gender issues. Sahiron explains that al-Manar's interpretation fails to employ modern linguistic and socio-historical analysis to interpret the meaning of qawwamah in the context of human equality. As a result, the spirit of reform in this interpretation falls short of gender liberation, but instead remains at the classical moral and social level.

4. From a methodological perspective, Tafsir al-Manar has also faced criticism for its lack of systematic interpretation. Rasyid Ridha often wrote his tafsir in the form of magazine articles (Majallat al-Manar), so his explanations sometimes do not follow the neat systematics of classical tafsir. According to Manna' al-Qaththan, al-Manar's method is more thematic and reactive to societal issues than academic methodology. However, this is precisely the strength and weakness of this tafsir; it is lively and communicative, but sometimes lacks strong methodological consistency.

5. Structurally, this work was not completed until 30 juz, because Sheikh Muhammad Abduh died before completing his commentary, and Rasyid Ridha also stopped at Surah Yusuf. According to Ahmad Syafii Maarif, the main weakness of this commentary is its limited scope, because Abduh's grand project of reform had not yet reached complete completion.

6. However, it is important to emphasize that these limitations do not diminish the strategic value of Tafsir al-Manar as a bridge between classical and contemporary interpretations. In Quraish Shihab's analysis, Abduh and Ridha succeeded in opening the door to modern interpretation that favors reason and social welfare, although they have not yet completely freed themselves from the boundaries of the classical tradition. This means that al-Manar has become an important foundation for subsequent generations to continue the tradition of interpretation that is more critical, contextual, and responsive to the challenges of the times.

    Thus, Tafsir al-Manar can be understood as both a transformative and transitional work: it marks a major shift from traditional to modern interpretation, yet it also leaves intellectual work for subsequent Islamic thinkers (Sekar et al., 2025). The critique of rationalism, social bias, and methodology in al-Manar demonstrates that this interpretation lives within a dynamic intellectual debate, and therein lies its richness and relevance for contemporary Islamic studies. Tafsir al-Manar remains crucial as a bridge between classical and modern interpretations, and has inspired the emergence of contextual interpretations in the Islamic world. This work demonstrates how the Qur'an can be read as a living, dynamic text, capable of interacting with changing times without losing the essence of its revealed teachings.

CONCLUSION

The research findings generally show that the Tafsir Al-Manar emerged as a response to the decline of the community's way of thinking, presenting a logical, contextual interpretation method, and focusing on social reform through the adabi-ijtima'i approach. The research problem was answered through the discovery of a continuity of reformist ideas in Al-Manar that connects the teachings of the Qur'an with modern conditions without ignoring the text's foundation and basic Islamic values.

As a follow-up, it is recommended that future research examine the extent to which the methods and thought patterns of Tafsir Al-Manar remain relevant in addressing contemporary issues such as plurality, technological development, and social justice. Furthermore, comparative studies with other modern commentaries are necessary to clarify Al-Manar's role and contribution to the development of the science of tafsir in a more practical and applicable manner.

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