



Cultural Intelligence from the Perspective of the Qur'an: A Thematic-Conceptual Study of the Tafsir *Al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab

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Abstract

This study examines cultural intelligence (CQ) from a Qur'anic perspective through a thematic-conceptual study of Tafsir Al-Misbah by M. Quraish Shihab. A qualitative library-research approach was employed. The primary data source is Tafsir Al-Misbah, while secondary sources include Shihab's other works, Qur'anic sciences literature, and scholarly works on cultural intelligence. Data were analyzed by combining thematic (maudhu'i) exegesis with qualitative content analysis, using the four dimensions of CQ—CQ Drive, CQ Knowledge, CQ Strategy, and CQ Action—as analytical categories rather than as sources for determining verse meaning. The findings show substantive coherence between Tafsir Al-Misbah and the four CQ dimensions: the concept of ta'âruf in QS. Al-Hujurat/49:13 coheres with CQ Drive; linguistic and racial diversity in QS. Ar-Rum/30:22 coheres with CQ Knowledge; the principles of hikmah, mau'izah hasanah, and jidâl bi al-latî hiya ahsan in QS. An-Nahl/16:125 cohere with CQ Strategy and CQ Action; and the principle of repelling evil with what is better in QS. Fushshilat/41:34 enriches CQ Action through self-restraint. The concept of ummatan wasaţan in QS. Al-Baqarah/2:143 functions as a regulative principle overarching all four dimensions. The adabi ijtimai (socio-literary) character of Tafsir Al-Misbah makes it a relevant corpus for formulating Qur'anic cultural intelligence—the capacity to understand, evaluate, and respond to human diversity grounded in taqwa, recognition of human dignity, wisdom, self-restraint, and moral balance. This study contributes to thematic-conceptual tafsir studies while offering theoretical enrichment to the discourse on cultural intelligence through the values of ta'âruf, hikmah, tasamuh, jidâl ahsan, and wasathiyyah.

Keywords: Cultural intelligence, the Qur'an, *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, *ta'âruf*, *wasathiyyah*.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology, transportation, education, trade, and human mobility has expanded encounters between individuals and between groups that have different languages, values, habits, and communication patterns. These encounters take place not only in international relations, but also in workplaces, educational institutions, religious communities, digital media, public services, and daily social life (Leung et al., 2014). The

intensity of the encounter makes the ability to interact appropriately in diverse cultural situations an important part of contemporary human competence. In cross-cultural psychology and management, this ability is known as *cultural intelligence* (CQ).

Earley and Ang (2003) define CQ as a person's ability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity. This definition places CQ not as a collection of information about the habits of a society, but as an adaptive capacity that connects thought processes, knowledge, motivation, and action. The model developed by Ang and colleagues then described CQ into four dimensions, namely *metacognitive CQ*, *cognitive CQ*, *motivational CQ*, and *behavioral CQ* (Ang et al., 2007; Van Dyne & Van Dyne, 2008). The four dimensions work as a single system: cultural knowledge without metacognitive awareness can turn into rigid stereotypes, while motivation without knowledge can produce courage without precision. Livermore (2011a, 2011b) reinforces this framework by emphasizing CQ as a skill that can be trained through cycles of *aware*, understanding, adapt, and performance, while Thomas and Inkson (2004, 2006) affirm the role of *mindfulness* as the heart of these cross-cultural competencies.

Empirical data show that cultural diversity is increasing rapidly around the world due to migration, urbanization, and economic integration between countries. Without cultural intelligence, individuals and groups are at risk of conflict, miscommunication, or discrimination due to ignorance of other cultural norms and values (Sarwari et al., 2024). Indonesia presents a very relevant context for this issue. The 2010 Population Census grouped tribal identities into 1,331 categories (Central Statistics Agency, 2015), while the 2024 Religious Harmony Index was at 76.47—up from the previous year, but still leaves a need to strengthen understanding, tolerance, and cross-group cooperation (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2026). The Ministry of Home Affairs even recorded more than 1,200 cases of ethnic and religious-based social friction in the past decade. This data shows that diversity as a social fact does not by itself result in harmonious relationships; it requires the capacity to examine assumptions, maintain engagement motivations, and adjust verbal and nonverbal behaviors (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Ali, 2020).

For Muslim people, cultural intelligence is not sufficiently understood as a technique for a person to successfully adjust. Adaptation needs to be guided by the values of truth, justice, responsibility, and respect for human dignity. The Qur'an explicitly places diversity as part of Allah's will as well as a moral calling, as He says in QS. Al-Hujurat/49:13:

"O man, verily We have created you from a male and a female. Then, We made you into nations and tribes so that you might know one another (li ta'ārafū). Indeed, the most noble among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious." (QS. Al-Hujurat/49:13)

This verse shows that cultural and ethnic differences are part of God's will which requires humans to develop the ability to understand and appreciate differences as a form of social piety. A similar principle is found in QS. Ar-Rum/30:22 which places the diversity of languages and skin colors as a sign of the greatness of Allah for those who have knowledge; QS. An-Nahl/16:125 which leads da'wah with *hikmah*, good teaching, and dialogue in the best way; QS. Fushshilat/41:34 which teaches the control of response through the principle of

rejecting evil with good; and QS. Al-Baqarah/2:143 which places Muslims as *the ummatan wasathan* (middle ummah) who maintain balance in their attitude.

Studies on CQ so far are still dominated by cross-cultural and management psychology perspectives born from the scientific traditions of North America and Western Europe (Rahman, 2020), while studies that place the Qur'an and Tafsir as the main sources of discussion of cultural intelligence are still relatively limited. Some studies have touched on the relationship between Qur'anic values and cross-cultural competence (Solihu, 2015; Munandar & Subakir, 2023), but not many have systematically built conceptual coherence between the CQ dimension and the interpretation of diversity verses in a single corpus of Tafsir in depth. Tafsir *Al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab was chosen as the corpus of this research because of its *adabi ijtimai* pattern—highlighting the relationship between verse messages and contemporary social reality (Wartini, 2014; Dewi & Harahap, 2022)—as well as because of its position as one of the most widely referenced complete interpretations of the 30 Indonesian juz in the country (Rustandi et al., 2022).

Based on this description, this research was formulated to answer three main questions. First, how is the theoretical study of cultural intelligence and how cultural intelligence is understood in the perspective of the Qur'an. Second, how is the coherence, difference, and enrichment between the Qur'anic values in Tafsir *Al-Misbah* and the dimensions of *CQ Drive*, *CQ Knowledge*, *CQ Strategy*, and *CQ Action*. Third, how are the characteristics of cultural intelligence from the perspective of the Qur'an that can be formulated based on the analysis of Tafsir *Al-Misbah*. To answer this question, this study aims to (1) describe the concept, dimensions, and position of cultural intelligence in the study of intercultural competence; (2) analyze M. Quraish Shihab's interpretation of the verses of diversity and cross-cultural interaction in Tafsir *Al-Misbah*; (3) analyze the coherence, difference, and enrichment between Qur'anic values and the CQ dimension; and (4) formulate the characteristics of cultural intelligence from the perspective of the Qur'an. This research is important because it places CQ not as a single theory that determines the meaning of verses, but as an analytical category to read the pattern of coherence between the findings of Tafsir and the discourse of contemporary cultural intelligence, so that its contribution is two-way: enriching the study of thematical-conceptual interpretation while offering ethical-theological correction and enrichment for CQ theory which has been secular-adaptive in nature.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research (Moleong, 2017; Hardani et al., 2020). This approach was chosen because the main data of the research was in the form of interpretive texts, concepts, arguments, and meaning relationships, not behavioral or numerical field data. The object of the research material is M. Quraish Shihab's interpretation of the verses of diversity and social interaction in Tafsir *Al-Misbah*, while the formal object is the concept of cultural intelligence. This distinction confirms that the text read is *Al-Misbah*, while CQ serves as a point of view to compile and analyze data, not as a source of determining the meaning of the verses.

The primary source of research data is *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Message, Impression, and Compatibility of the Qur'an* by M. Quraish Shihab (Shihab, 2002), especially volumes that contain interpretations of corpus verses. Editions and page numbers are recorded consistently so that each citation can be verified. Secondary data sources include the works of M. Quraish Shihab (Shihab, 2007, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2019), Qur'anic literature and thematic Tafsir (Alfarmawi, 2000; Mustaqim, 2024; Badrudin, 2022; Nawawi, 2016, 2020), comparative interpretations such as Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar* (2015) and *Tafsir Ibn Katsir* (2004), as well as primary *literature on cultural intelligence* (Earley & Ang, 2003; Van Dyne & Van Dyne, 2008; Livermore, 2011a, 2011b; Thomas & Inkson, 2004) and a number of national and international journal articles relevant to the theme of moderation, diversity, and cross-cultural communication.

The focus of the research on the thematic study of the Qur'an on the concept of cultural intelligence makes the thematic method (*maudhu'i*) the main method of analysis. This method was first initiated by Ahmad al-Kumi and developed by Abd al-Hayy al-Farmawi (2000) through the work of *Al-Bidayah fi al-Tafsir al-Maudhu'i*, which is the procedure of collecting verses that have a related meaning to one theme, compromising verses that are *'am* and *khash*, *mutlaq* and *muqayyad*, until it boils down to one complete understanding. Document analysis (Bowen, 2009) is used as a systematic procedure for finding, selecting, assessing, organizing, and synthesizing data in documents, combined with qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018; Miles et al., 2014) to establish units of meaning, categories, and patterns of relationships.

The stages of data collection and analysis are carried out through nine steps: (1) establishing operational definitions and four-dimensional indicators of CQ based on primary sources of CQ; (2) establish analysis categories in the form of *CQ Drive*, *CQ Knowledge*, *CQ Strategy*, and *CQ Action*; (3) determine the criteria for selecting verses, namely verses that contain diversity recognition, social recognition processes, communication strategies, behavioral adaptation, response control, or moderation principles; (4) compiling M. Quraish Shihab's interpretation of verses that meet the criteria; (5) record the context of the verse, linguistic analysis, *reasonableness*, and social message interpretation; (6) determine units of analysis in the form of statements, concepts, or arguments that are relevant to cross-cultural interactions; (7) encoding the unit of meaning based on the CQ category while recording data that does not match or exceeds the category; (8) compare units in the same category to find patterns and variations; and (9) analyze the coherence, differences, and enrichments between the theory of CQ and the Qur'anic values in *Al-Misbah*.

The validity of the data was checked through four procedures: referential accuracy (matching citations to volumes, pages, and editions of sources), intratextual consistency (tracing M. Quraish Shihab's interpretation of the same concept in different verses or volumes), referential adequacy (using CQ's primary work and relevant scientific research), and analytical transparency (presenting verse criteria, units of analysis, codes, and reasons for the relationship between Qur'anic values and CQ dimensions). Checks are also carried out through negative case analysis, namely recording and discussing units of interpretation that do not support mapping or actually show the limits of adaptation of CQ theory, so that the

purpose of the research is not trapped in finding as much similarity as possible, but rather produces critical and accountable readings. This study has three methodological limits that are explicitly stated: the use of one Tafsir as the main corpus so that it does not represent the entire tradition of Tafsir; coding based on CQ theory which has the potential to reduce if categories are used rigidly; as well as the nature of literature that produces conceptual-normative constructions and cannot prove the practical effectiveness of the model formulated in certain groups of people.

RESULTS

Profile of M. Quraish Shihab and the Character of Tafsir *Al-Misbah*

M. Quraish Shihab studied Islamic higher education at Al-Azhar, Cairo, until he earned a doctorate in the field of Qur'anic sciences with a *summa cum laude predicate*, before devoting himself as an academic, higher education bureaucrat, and prolific writer in Indonesia. The intellectual track record forms the character of his interpretation that bridges the depth of classical scholarship with the needs of contemporary readers. His extensive works—ranging from *Grounding the Qur'an* (2013b), *Insight into the Qur'an* (2007), *Al-Lubab* (2012), *Rules of Tafsir* (2013a), to *Wasathiyyah* (2019)—show a consistent concern for the social relevance of the Qur'an.

Tafsir *Al-Misbah* (Shihab, 2002) is written using *the tablili method* which is enriched by a thematic approach to reasonable explanations between verses and between surahs, sourced from the interpretation of *bi al-ra'yi* which is based on the rules of language, history, and the socio-cultural context of Indonesia. Systematically, the pattern of interpretation is classified as *adabi ijtima'i* (literary-cultural-society)—a pattern that emphasizes the beauty of the language of the Qur'an as well as the relevance of its message to social issues (Wartini, 2014; Saladin, 2021; Tanjung, 2014). This character is consistently found in various studies of *Al-Misbah*, which shows that the interpreter does not stop at the literal linguistic meaning, but moves towards the social message and practical implications of the verse for life (Amin & Abror, 2025; Rustandi et al., 2022). This pattern is what makes *Al-Misbah* relevant as a primary corpus for reading the issue of diversity and cross-cultural relations, because interpreters consistently connect the linguistic meaning of verses with the social needs of Indonesia's pluralistic society.

The position of Tafsir *Al-Misbah* as the primary corpus in this study is built on three considerations. First, its completeness as a 30-juz Tafsir allows a consistent search of one theme in various verses and surahs. Second, the use of communicative Indonesian makes the message verse easier to verify and compare with the CQ concept without losing the depth of meaning. Third, this commentary's attention to *reasonableness* makes the verses about diversity not read in isolation from the social ethical context that surrounds them—for example. Al-Hujurat/49:13 is always read together with the prohibition of ridicule and prejudice in the previous verses (QS. Al-Hujurat/49:11–12).

Ta'âruf as the Foundation of CQ Drive

QS. Al-Hujurat/49:13 is the most fundamental starting point for cultural intelligence from the perspective of the Qur'an. In Tafsir *Al-Misbah*, the word *ta'âruf* is not narrowed down to just passive "knowing each other", but is understood as an active process of opening oneself, getting to know others, understanding their social background, and avoiding judgments based on prejudice. The creation of man from a pair of men and women who later developed into nations and tribes is interpreted not as a mere biological fact, but as a theological basis for the ethical obligation to know each other (Alifandi & Ass'ari, 2025; Khairunisa & Kusnadi, 2021).

Within the framework of CQ, cross-cultural motivation (*motivational CQ/CQ Drive*) is generally understood as interest, self-confidence, and the drive to engage in different cultural situations (Ang et al., 2007). *Al-Misbah* provides a theological basis for this impulse: diversity is not seen as a social coincidence, but rather as part of the will of creation that directs man to build relationships beyond the boundaries of tribe and nation. The motivation to know the other party is not born out of instrumental attraction or cultural exoticism, but from the theological awareness that God made people different so that they would know *each other*—a reciprocal relationship, not a one-sided relationship that places one party as an object of observation. The measure of glory emphasized at the end of the verse—that is, piety, not tribal or national identity—makes the Qur'anic *ta'âruf* fundamentally different from the cross-cultural motivation that is purely oriented towards social effectiveness: recognition is directed at the recognition of human dignity, not simply at the success of adaptation.

Diversity as CQ Knowledge: From Cultural Knowledge to Literacy of Meaning

QS. Ar-Rum/30:22 affirms that diversity of language and skin color is among the signs of God's greatness for the learned. In Tafsir *Al-Misbah*, the emphasis on the word "for those who are knowledgeable" (*lil-'âlimîn*) provides an important basis for the rejection of superficial cultural knowledge. Knowing a certain number of terms, clothing, food, or customs of a group is not enough to be called knowledgeable about diversity; Deeper knowledge must touch on the system of meaning, value, and historical experience behind these differences.

Livermore (2011a) distinguishes *cultural-general knowledge* from *culture-specific knowledge*. The Qur'an contains many clues about diversity, communication, and social manners that do not always use cultural terms in the modern anthropological sense, but their substance is closely related to the way humans understand differences in language, skin color, and social background (Nimah et al., 2024). *Al-Misbah* expanded *CQ Knowledge* into what in this study is called meaning literacy: the ability to read why a symbol is understood differently by a particular community and how language can be a marker of closeness or even social distance. Thus, the diversity of language and skin color becomes a knowledge base that is at once theological (because it is understood as a verse of Allah), social (because it concerns human relations), and ethical (because it demands respect and anti-discrimination). It is at this point that *Al-Misbah* gives an important enrichment to *CQ Knowledge*: cross-cultural knowledge is not just a technical competence, but also a moral mandate.

Hikmah, Mau'izhab Hasanah, and Jidâl Aḥsan as CQ Strategy and CQ Action

QS. An-Nahl/16:125 provides a comprehensive framework for cross-cultural communication strategies and actions. This verse commands that the invitation to God's way be done with *ḥikmah* (wisdom), *mau'izhab ḥasanah* (good teaching), and *jidâl bi al-lati hiya aḥsan* (dialogue in the best way). In Tafsir *Al-Misbah*, the three terms are not treated as synonyms, but rather as three different approaches adapted to the conditions of the interlocutor: *ḥikmah* for the educated who are able to think critically, *mau'izhab ḥasanah* for the layman who needs more advice and example, and *jidâl aḥsan* for those who refute or disagree (Khairi et al., 2023; Mubarak, 2023).

The structure of this sentence is closely coherent with *the CQ Strategy* (the metacognitive dimension in Ang and his colleagues' terminology), which deals with the awareness, planning, and monitoring of cross-cultural communication strategies (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008), as well as with *CQ Action* (behavioral dimension), which deals with the adjustment of verbal and nonverbal actions. *Al-Misbah* emphasized that the choice of approach is not just a rhetorical technique, but a reflection of respect for the condition and dignity of the interlocutors. This principle is reinforced by QS. Al-Hujurat/49:11, which forbids a people to make fun of another people because it may be better in the sight of Allah. The coherence between these two verses shows that the Qur'an not only recognizes cultural diversity, but also provides comprehensive guidance on how to understand and appreciate it, covering cognitive aspects (knowledge of differences), affective (appreciative attitudes), and behaviors (proper ways of interacting)—three aspects that are all integral components of *CQ Knowledge* as well as *CQ Strategy* and *CQ Action* as a whole.

Self-Control in QS. Fushshilat/41:34 as CQ Action Enrichment

QS. Fushshilat/41:34 affirms that good and evil are not the same, and that evil must be rejected in a better way, so that the hostile person can be transformed into like a loyal friend. In Tafsir *Al-Misbah*, this verse is interpreted as an affirmation of *ḥikmah al-ta'âmul* (wisdom in interacting) which is the basis for cultural intelligence in the Islamic perspective. The message of this verse is performative: the transformation of hostile relationships into friendship is not promised as an automatic guarantee, but as a potential that arises from patience and response control.

In the framework of CQ, *behavioral CQ* is generally measured from the conformity of verbal and nonverbal actions with applicable social norms (Ang et al., 2007). *Al-Misbah* enriches this understanding by adding a dimension of moral resilience: adaptive behavior is measured not only by its compatibility with social norms, but also by its ability to maintain goodness, prevent the escalation of conflict, and open up the possibility of reconciliation even in hostile situations. This principle of rejecting evil in a better way makes *CQ Action* Qur'ani not only a social adjustment strategy, but also a form of self-control oriented towards improving long-term relationships.

***Wasathiyyah* as a Regulative Principle**

QS. Al-Baqarah/2:143 places Muslims as *the ummatan wasathan*—a just and balanced chosen people, both in beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, and behavior. In Tafsir *Al-Misbah*, *wasathiyyah* is described as a character that is closely related to the Islamic method of thinking which includes issues of faith, morality, and sharia, where scholars balance the postulates of *naqli* and *aqli*, facts and theories, goals and means (Rauf, 2019; Fazal & Saleh, 2022; Putri & Fadlullah, 2022).

This research does not place *wasathiyyah* as the fifth dimension that is parallel to the four dimensions of CQ, but as a regulative principle that overshadows all dimensions of cultural intelligence. This regulative function is important because *wasathiyyah* maintains a balance between openness and assertiveness of identity, between adaptation and moral boundaries, and between the effectiveness of communication and religious responsibility. With this principle, the cultural intelligence of the Qur'anic perspective does not fall into the relativism of infinite values, nor does it turn into a closed attitude that rejects any form of encounter with different parties.

DISCUSSION

Coherence, not Equivalence of Terms

The findings of this study confirm that the coherence between the Qur'anic values in Tafsir *Al-Misbah* and the CQ dimension is not built on the equality of terms, but on the suitability of the structure of meaning and function. The CQ theory serves as a categorization tool that helps organize aspects of cross-cultural ability, while Tafsir *Al-Misbah* provides a source of Qur'anic meaning, moral boundaries, and goal orientation (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). This difference in function is important so that the research does not fall into the anachronism that imposes modern theory into the verse, while preventing normative readings that are too general to be able to dialogue with contemporary studies. This kind of methodological prudence is in line with the principle that thematic interpretation needs to maintain the relationship between themes, contexts, and verse messages so that contemporary issues are not forced into the Qur'an (Nawawi, 2016).

These findings show that each dimension of CQ finds its functional equivalent in the Qur'anic concept, but it is always accompanied by an expansion of theological and ethical meaning. *CQ Drive*, which in the CQ literature is understood as self-interest and efficacy (Ang et al., 2007), is expanded by *ta'aruf* into a moral obligation based on creation. *CQ Knowledge*, which in the framework of Livermore (2011a) includes general and specific knowledge about culture, is expanded into literacy of meaning that is theological-ethical. *CQ Strategy* and *CQ Action*, which are commonly understood as behavioral conformity with social norms, are enriched by the principles of *hikmah*, *jidâl ahsan*, and self-control is the ability to maintain the dignity of others, not just achieve communication effectiveness. This consistent pattern of expansion shows the general direction of the Qur'an's contribution to the CQ: from adaptive capability to one based on moral responsibility.

Adab as a Measure of Cultural Relations

One of the important findings of this study is that Tafsir *Al-Misbah* places adab as a measure of the quality of cultural relations, not just a general invitation to respect each other. In the interpretation of QS. Al-Hujurat/49:11–12, M. Quraish Shihab affirms the prohibition of ridicule, denunciation, calling with bad titles, prejudice, finding faults, and committing *ghibah*. These prohibitions show that the Qur'an builds social relations not only through positive commands, but also through restrictions on behavior that undermines human dignity (Tahir, 2023; Shofwan & Munib, 2023). Thus, Qur'anic cultural intelligence is not only measured by the ability to recognize other cultures, but also by the ability to avoid demeaning actions of others—a measure that is not explicitly emphasized in the conventional CQ literature.

This principle of manners serves as a moral boundary that prevents cultural intelligence from turning into social skills that are devoid of ethical responsibility. A person may be good at adapting language or understanding the customs of other groups, but when that ability is used to mock a dialect, demean cultural symbols, or reinforce prejudice, it loses the value of the Qur'an. The principle of speaking well or silently narrated by al-Bukhari from Abu Hurairah also strengthens this verbal control: speech always has moral consequences, and in cultural relations speech can be a bridge as well as a tool of humiliation. Manners can thus be understood through four measures: the way of looking at people (not based on ethnicity, skin color, or social status), the way of speaking (the truth that is not conveyed in a condescending manner), the way of dissenting (differences that do not turn into insults), and the way of using cultural knowledge (which breeds respect, not domination).

The placement of adab as a measure does not mean that it requires an unrestricted compromise attitude. Criticism of errors, injustices, or deviations is still necessary in social life, but it must be conveyed in a way that does not undermine human dignity. This balance is important in a pluralistic society, because many conflicts arise not only from differences of opinion, but from insulting ways of conveying. On the other hand, politeness that masks injustice is not true manners. Thus, the cultural intelligence of the Qur'an falls between two fallacies: identity superiority (considering one's own culture to be more noble so that other cultures are easily underestimated) and dimensionless relativism (accepting everything without considering justice and dignity).

Social Contribution: A Framework for Living Together in a Pluralistic Society

The contribution of Tafsir *Al-Misbah* in this study is also seen in the social realm, namely its ability to provide a framework for living together for a pluralistic society. This framework departs from the view that human diversity is not an emergency that must be removed, but a reality that must be managed responsibly. In the Indonesian context, this contribution becomes relevant because pluralism is not just a discourse, but a demographic and cultural reality that is reflected in a variety of tribes and regional languages (Central Statistics Agency, 2015). However, plurality does not automatically give birth to social maturity; Differences can be a source of social wealth or a source of tension, depending on how they are managed.

The framework of living together in Tafsir *Al-Misbah* can be understood through three main directions: viewing the other party as a dignified fellow creature of Allah, maintaining the way of interacting so as not to hurt the honor of others, and making differences a way to build cooperation, not a reason to strengthen social distance. This framework guards a pluralistic society from two extreme fallacy: social exclusivism that closes off because it feels its own identity is most correct, and boundless openness that accepts everything without consideration of values. In this case, *wasathiyyah* functions as a social controller that maintains a balance between the firmness of principles and the ability to get along well with different parties (Umar, 2021). This finding is in line with the emphasis of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia on the importance of the principles of fairness, balance, accommodation, inclusiveness, and tolerance in religious moderation, although Tafsir *Al-Misbah* does not need to be positioned as a state policy document, but rather as a source of Tafsir that provides a basis for value for more operational policies, education, and da'wah.

Other Mufasir's Views and *Al-Misbah's* Position

Comparison with Hamka's (2015) Tafsir *Al-Azhar* and Ibn Katherine's (2004) Tafsir on QS. Al-Hujurat/49:13 shows different but complementary emphasises. The Tafsir of *Al-Azhar* tends to emphasize the dimension of Sufism and the spiritual appreciation of the brotherhood of humanity, while the Tafsir of Ibn Kathir emphasizes a textual-hadith approach that explains the asbab al-nuzul and related narrations strictly. Tafsir *Al-Misbah* occupies its own position because its *adabi ijtimai'i* pattern consistently connects these three dimensions—linguistic, spiritual, and social—with the contemporary reality of Indonesian society. This comparison confirms that the selection of *Al-Misbah* as a single corpus is not because he represents the entire tradition of Tafsir, but because of his most productive character in answering research questions about cultural intelligence.

Characteristics of Cultural Intelligence Perspective of the Qur'an

Based on all of the above findings, this study formulates cultural intelligence from the perspective of the Qur'an as the ability to understand, assess, and respond appropriately to human diversity, based on piety, recognition of human dignity, adequate knowledge, *hikmah* in communication, self-control, the best dialogue, and moral balance (*wasathiyyah*). This formulation is different from modern CQ which is more concerned with the area of adaptation effectiveness. Through Tafsir *Al-Misbah*, the perspective of the Qur'an expands the CQ with a theological and ethical orientation, so that cross-cultural abilities are not only considered effective, but also right, just, and dignified. These fundamental differences can be summarized in three points. First, the source of motivation: modern CQ is based on self-interest and efficacy, while Qur'anic cultural intelligence is based on a theological awareness of diverse creation. Second, the measure of success: modern CQ assesses success from the effectiveness of adaptation and task performance, while Qur'anic cultural intelligence assesses success from the maintenance of human dignity and relational justice. Third, the limits of application: Modern CQ is in principle open to any form of adjustment that produces

effectiveness, while the cultural intelligence of the Qur'an is limited by *wasathiyah* which rejects both a closed attitude and openness without moral limits.

The contribution of *Al-Misbah's* interpretation to the development of Qur'anic cultural intelligence can be formulated in four layers. Methodologically, this Tafsir shows how to read a verse contextually without letting go of its basic meaning. Conceptually, he directs cultural intelligence to an ethical awareness of human dignity. Normatively, he places *adab* as a measure of cultural relations. Socially, it provides a framework for coexistence for a pluralistic society. These four layers affirm that the cultural intelligence of the Qur'an in Tafsir *Al-Misbah* is not just a general social idea, but a formulation of values that are firmly based on the Qur'an and relevant to the life of the pluralistic Indonesian society.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study enriches the study of thematic-conceptual interpretation by showing how contemporary theory can be used critically as an analytical category without reducing the authority of the meaning of Tafsir. This research also offers enrichment for CQ discourse by introducing a theological-ethical dimension that has been under-appreciated in the CQ literature which is dominated by cross-cultural perspectives of organizational psychology and management (Rockstuhl et al., 2011; Presbyter, 2020). Practically, the formulation of Qur'anic cultural intelligence can be the basis for strengthening religious moderation materials, character education, and intercultural communication in Islamic educational institutions, as well as a guideline for preachers and managers of religious institutions in conveying religious messages based on *hikmah* and the best dialogue in the midst of an increasingly connected society through mobility and digital media.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that there is a substantive coherence between Qur'anic values in Tafsir *Al-Misbah* and the dimension of *cultural intelligence*. QS. Al-Hujurat/49:13 places the diversity of nations and tribes in the goal of *li ta'ârafû*, which in the framework of the CQ is coherent with *the CQ Drive*, but *Al-Misbah* gives a more normative orientation because the introduction is directed at the recognition of human dignity and the measure of glory based on piety, not mere social effectiveness. QS. Ar-Rum/30:22 shows that differences in language and skin color are signs of God's greatness, providing a theological foundation for *CQ Knowledge* that does not stop at the recognition of outward characteristics, but rather leads to a spiritual awareness of diversity. QS. An-Nahl/16:125 provides the basis for *CQ Strategy* and *CQ Action* through *hikmah*, *mau'izhah hasanah*, and *jidâl bi al-latî hiya aḥsan*, which affirm that cultural intelligence is not only the ability to adjust behavior, but also to choose the way of communication that is correct, fair, and not degrading to others. QS. Fushshilat/41:34 enriches *the behavioral CQ* through the principle of rejecting evil in a better way, which demands patience and self-control. QS. Al-Baqarah/2:143 provides a regulative principle through the concept of *ummatan wasathan*, which maintains a balance between openness and assertiveness of identity, adaptation and moral boundaries, as well as the effectiveness of communication and religious responsibility.

Based on these findings, cultural intelligence from the perspective of the Qur'an is formulated as the ability to understand, assess, and respond appropriately to human diversity on the basis of piety, recognition of human dignity, adequate knowledge, *hikmah* in communication, self-control, the best dialogue, and moral balance. This formulation expands the modern CQ with a theological and ethical orientation, so that cross-cultural skills are not only considered effective, but also right, fair, and dignified. This study has limitations because it only uses Tafsir *Al-Misbah* as the main corpus, is literature so that it does not measure the level of cultural intelligence of individuals or groups empirically, and limits the use of CQ theory as an analytical category without testing the *Cultural Intelligence Scale* instrument psychometrically.

Further research is suggested to expand the corpus by comparing Tafsir *Al-Misbah* and other Indonesian Tafsir that have a focus on social issues, developing this conceptual model into field research—for example in multicultural education in Islamic universities or cross-cultural da'wah training—and testing its application in the context of religious communication in the digital space. Islamic educational institutions can use these findings to strengthen religious moderation and character education materials integratively, while preachers and managers of religious institutions need to pay attention to the principles of cultural intelligence—departing from *hikmah* and the best dialogue—in conveying religious messages in an increasingly connected society through mobility and digital media.

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