

Minority Discourse in Abdurrahman Wahid's Thought: A Critical Discourse Analysis of *Tabayun Gus Dur* from an Islamic Communication Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis wacana kritis pemikiran Abdurrahman Wahid tentang kelompok minoritas dalam perspektif Komunikasi Islam melalui buku *Tabayun Gus Dur: Pribumisasi Islam, Hak Minoritas, Reformasi Kultural*. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kepustakaan. Data primer berasal dari teks buku tersebut, sedangkan data sekunder diperoleh dari buku, artikel jurnal, dan literatur relevan. Analisis mengintegrasikan kerangka Analisis Wacana Kritis Teun A. van Dijk dan Norman Fairclough. Van Dijk digunakan untuk mengkaji struktur makro, superstruktur, dan struktur mikro, sedangkan Fairclough menganalisis praktik diskursif dan sosiokultural. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa wacana minoritas dibangun melalui nilai pluralisme, kesetaraan, toleransi, kebebasan, penghormatan terhadap keberagaman, dan perlindungan hak minoritas. Wacana tersebut disampaikan secara argumentatif, kritis, dialogis, komunikatif, dan inklusif, serta mengkritik diskriminasi, stereotip, eksklusivisme, intoleransi, dan dominasi kekuasaan. Dalam perspektif Komunikasi Islam, pemikiran Abdurrahman Wahid berkaitan dengan prinsip *tabayyun*, *qaulan sadīdan*, *qaulan ma'rūfan*, *qaulan ma'rūfan*, *qaulan balighan*, *qaulan karīman*, dan *qaulan maysūran* secara konsisten kuat.

Abstract: This qualitative library study examines minority discourse in Abdurrahman Wahid's *Tabayun Gus Dur: Pribumisasi Islam, Hak Minoritas, Reformasi Kultural* from an Islamic communication perspective. The book provides primary data, supplemented by relevant books, journal articles and other literature. The analysis combines Van Dijk's macrostructure, superstructure and microstructure with Fairclough's discursive and sociocultural practices. The findings show that minority discourse centres on pluralism, equality, tolerance, freedom, respect for diversity and minority rights. Its argumentative, critical, dialogical and inclusive style challenges discrimination, stereotypes, exclusivism, intolerance and domination. The discourse reflects *tabayyun*, *qaulan sadīdan*, *qaulan ma'rūfan*, *qaulan ma'rūfan*, *qaulan balighan*, *qaulan karīman* and *qaulan maysūran*.

Keywords:

Critical Discourse Analysis

Minority Groups

Islamic Communication

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I. Introduction

Indonesia's religious, ethnic, cultural and political diversity can become a source of conflict when identity differences coincide with unequal majority-minority relations. Discrimination, exclusion, restrictions on rights, stereotyping and intolerance therefore involve social constructions, power and public discourse (Wijaya, A., & Nur, 2022) (Rianti, 2021). Islamic communication offers a perspective on religious narratives that promote dialogue, justice and

inclusion (Nur, A. N. I. S., 2024). Abdurrahman Wahid's ideas on these issues appear in *Tabayun Gus Dur: The Indigenization of Islam, Minority Rights, Cultural Reform* (Wahid, 1998). Edited by Moh. Shaleh Isre, the volume brings together writings and interviews on religion, politics, culture, democracy, pluralism and minority rights. It provides a corpus for examining how diversity, majority–minority relations and power are articulated in public discourse.

Previous studies have examined Gus Dur's pluralism as a foundation for social harmony, intercultural dialogue and religious freedom (Safitri, 2024) and religion as an ethical basis for humanity and the protection of marginalised groups (Faishal, 2025). (Jones, L. M., & Mitchell, 2016) considers the relevance of his pluralism to digital citizenship. These studies clarify the values underlying his thought, but leave room to investigate how minority discourse is constructed in *Tabayun Gus Dur*. This study examines its linguistic structures, arguments, production contexts and relations to social power, rather than focusing primarily on its philosophical content or digital applications.

The study integrates the complementary Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) frameworks of Teun A. van Dijk and Norman Fairclough. Van Dijk's framework examines macrostructure (themes), superstructure (the organisation of arguments) and microstructure (word choice, syntax, coherence, pronouns, style and rhetoric) (Ratnaningsih, D., & Ningsih, 2019). Fairclough's framework connects these textual features to discursive practices, including production, circulation and consumption, and to sociocultural conditions, ideology and power relations. Together, they situate the construction of minority discourse within its social context.

Islamic communication serves as an interpretative perspective rather than a separate analytical model. The principles of *tabayyun*, *qaulan sadīdan*, *qaulan ma'rūfān*, *qaulan ma'rūfān*, *qaulan balighan*, *qaulan karīman* and *qaulan maysūran* guide the interpretation of the discourse's ethical orientation. They help explain how its treatment of diversity, equality, minority protection and discrimination relates to Islamic communication values.

The study's contribution lies in combining textual, discursive and sociocultural analysis with an Islamic communication perspective. It aims to explain how *Tabayun Gus Dur* represents minority groups, organises arguments about their rights and relates these arguments to power, social conditions and communication ethics.

II. Method

This qualitative study uses library research (Mezmir, 2020) and integrates Van Dijk's analysis of discourse structure with Fairclough's analysis of discursive and sociocultural practices. The findings are interpreted through the principles of Islamic communication.

The study examines Abdurrahman Wahid's thought in *Tabayun Gus Dur: The Indigenization of Islam, Minority Rights, Cultural Reform*. Its analytical object is the representation of minority groups in discourse on religion, ethnicity, politics, ideology and power.

The book constitutes the primary source. Secondary sources include books, journal articles and other literature on Gus Dur, minority groups, CDA and Islamic communication. The study involves no fieldwork.

Data collection involved reading the entire book, identifying and recording relevant passages, and classifying them by religion, ethnicity, politics and ideology, and power. The selected passages were examined at the macrostructural, superstructural and microstructural levels, then related to their production and sociocultural contexts. The final stage interpreted the findings through Islamic communication principles and drew conclusions.

III. Results and Discussion

A. Critical Discourse Analysis of *Tabayun Gus Dur*

The analysis connects the textual construction of minority discourse with its production contexts and power relations, using Van Dijk's and Fairclough's frameworks (Ratnaningsih, D., & Ningsih, 2019)(Fairclough, 2025).

1) Macro Structure

In *Tabayun Gus Dur*, pluralism, equality, democracy and minority protection are linked to public participation and civil society. Discussions of leadership succession, NU, ICMI, Islam and ideology situate minority rights within wider power relations (Wahid, 1998)

Macrostructure concerns a text's overall meaning. Four interrelated themes emerge: the democratisation of religious life, the critique of sectarianism, the protection of vulnerable groups and the politics of representation.

The first theme connects minority protection with national responsibility and the development of a more inclusive religious outlook:

"Before long, people will have forgotten all about them and what they did. This alone could have traumatic consequences for religious minority groups in this country. This is what we must consider. From an Islamic perspective, there is no problem. But from the perspective of national life, with a major Islamic organisation such as NU, I am thinking not only of NU or the Muslim community, but of the nation." (Abdurrahman Wahid, *Tabayun Gus Dur*, p. 68) (Wahid, 1998)

The reference to traumatic consequences presents minority protection as a national moral responsibility. The shift from an Islamic perspective to national life places the issue within the wider Indonesian polity.

The second theme challenges sectarian narratives that polarise religious communities:

"Look, there is currently a strong trend towards sectarianism. There are mutual accusations regarding attempts at Christianisation or Islamisation. Christians accuse Muslims of carrying out Islamisation. Then, Muslims accuse Christians of carrying out Christianisation. Well, isn't this sectarianism?" (Abdurrahman Wahid, *Tabayun Gus Dur*, p. 15) (Wahid, 1998)

The reciprocal accusations construct each community as threatened by the other. Gus Dur's rhetorical question reframes this cycle as sectarianism and challenges its presentation as a legitimate religious conflict.

The third theme grounds the protection of vulnerable groups in Islamic jurisprudence:

"In Arabic, this is known as 'dafu dororil mashumin' preventing harm to those under protection. In books on fiqh, it is stated that both Muslims and non-Muslims living within the same community must be protected." (Abdurrahman Wahid, *Tabayun Gus Dur*, p. 70) (Wahid, 1998)

References to Arabic terminology and fiqh establish religious authority for an inclusive obligation: protection extends to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The fourth theme questions the claim that vocal religious elites represent the entire Muslim community:

"Only a few are angry; the rest are not. Now look: those carrying jerrycans to set fire to the Monitor office, those throwing stones, the noisy voices of community leaders like that—including those calling for a boycott of Kompas and Gramedia are they the way

forward? That means the main body of the community is not affected by that reaction.” (Abdurrahman Wahid, Tabayun Gus Dur, pp. 63–64) (Wahid, 1998)

Gus Dur distinguishes a vocal minority from the wider community. This distinction challenges intolerant groups’ claims to speak for all Muslims.

2) Superstructure

Superstructure concerns the organisation of discourse (Ratnaningsih, D., & Ningsih, 2019). Gus Dur’s writings and interviews develop four related argument patterns: diagnosis–solution, particular–universal, intertextual legitimation and majority–minority representation.

The diagnosis–solution pattern appears in the Monitor discussion. Gus Dur moves from the immediate reaction to its potential traumatic effects on religious minorities, then calls for reflection and protection (Wahid, 1998). The sequence links the identification of harm to a normative response.

The particular–universal pattern moves from specific counterexamples to a general rejection of stereotyping:

‘But aren’t the minorities here already rich? Ah, no go to Batak, to Seram, to Irian. We’re always so quick to stereotype. How many of our own people are in the conglomerates? You can’t possibly judge a group of millions by ten or twenty people, can you?’ (Abdurrahman Wahid, Tabayun Gus Dur, p. 70) (Wahid, 1998)

The passage first presents an opposing claim, then counters it with geographical examples and rejects the inference from a few wealthy individuals to millions of people. The resulting principle extends beyond the immediate case.

Intertextual legitimation follows a three-part sequence in the fiqh passage: Arabic terminology identifies the concept, jurisprudential texts supply authority, and protection is extended to both Muslims and non-Muslims (Wahid, 1998) pp. 70. This sequence gives the argument theological legitimacy.

The representation pattern begins by describing the angry group as small, lists its actions and concludes that the wider community does not share its reaction ((Wahid, 1998), pp. 63–64). This structure challenges the group’s representative authority.

3) Microstructure

Microstructure concerns semantics, syntax, style and rhetoric. Gus Dur’s direct, conversational language challenges generalisations and presents an inclusive view of minority groups. Titles such as ‘Do Not Use Old Standards’ and ‘Politics as Morality, Not an Institution’ illustrate this critical style (Wahid, 1998); (Alfaedz, 2021).

Semantically, references to the country and national life position minorities within a shared political community. Gus Dur also makes his communicative intention explicit:

“Well, here, to be frank, I deliberately went against the grain to show the religious minorities in this country that those vociferous people do not represent Islam.” (Abdurrahman Wahid, Tabayun Gus Dur, p. 68)(Wahid, 1998)

The phrase referring to the country establishes a national setting. The description of vociferous people identifies the behaviour under criticism, while the first-person statement makes Gus Dur’s deliberate disagreement and personal responsibility explicit.

The geographical references to Batak, Seram and Irian provide concrete counterexamples to the claim that minorities are wealthy. The contrast between ten or twenty individuals and millions exposes the disproportionate generalisation, while the concluding question invites agreement ((Wahid, 1998), p. 70).

Pronoun choice links criticism to the speaker's position. In the stereotyping passage, the inclusive first-person plural includes Gus Dur in the failing he criticises. In his statement about opposing vocal groups, the first-person singular asserts personal agency and responsibility ((Wahid, 1998), pp. 68, 70).

The Monitor passage creates coherence through contrast, parallel descriptions of aggressive actions and an inference separating those actions from the wider community's response ((Wahid, 1998), pp. 63–64). These features connect the examples to the argument about representation.

Sentence forms also serve different persuasive functions. Imperatives invite action, declaratives state a judgement, and interrogatives encourage the audience to consider its implications.

The invitation to visit Batak, Seram and Irian functions as an imperative calling for empirical verification (Keraf, 2009; Prasetyo et al., 2023). It positions listeners as participants in examining claims, consistent with tabayyun's emphasis on clarification before accepting or circulating information (Sobur, 2006).

The accompanying declarative statement presents stereotyping as a shared social practice (Chaer, A., & Agustina, 2014); (Prasetyo, B., Wahyudi, A., & Lestari, 2023)). Its inclusive pronoun builds solidarity and reduces the distance between speaker and audience (Rahardi, 2009).

The movement from an imperative to a declarative connects verification with criticism of stereotypes. This variation gives the argument both practical and normative force and can help sustain attention (Sobur, 2006).

Informal word choices further reduce social distance. In the Indonesian expressions discussed in the text, the particle *ah* marks rejection, *nggak* adopts a conversational register, and *selalu* intensifies the criticism. These choices make a serious argument accessible without removing its critical content.

The *fiqh* passage also combines a source of authority with an obligation. References to what jurisprudential texts state support the argument, while *must* expresses the duty to protect Muslims and non-Muslims ((Wahid, 1998), p. 70).

Rhetorically, Gus Dur contrasts moderate and vocal groups, and stereotypes with social realities. His description of the silent majority illustrates this strategy:

"The voice of Islam is the silent voice the silent majority who say nothing but still get on well with others and work well. That is what they must see; they must not focus on the aggressive ones." (Abdurrahman Wahid, Tabayun Gus Dur, p. 68)(Wahid, 1998)

The contrast redirects attention from aggressive voices to ordinary coexistence. Repetition emphasises the majority's quieter presence, while the paradox of a silent voice challenges the assumption that the loudest group is the most representative.

Gus Dur also reframes the perceived source of a threat:

"If there are concerns that the minority is eroding the majority? That's just language; a lack of self-confidence." (Abdurrahman Wahid, Tabayun Gus Dur, p. 70)(Wahid, 1998)

The response shifts the diagnosis from an allegedly threatening minority to insecurity within the majority. It challenges the premise of the question and redirects scrutiny towards those constructing the threat.

4) Discursive Practices

Discursive practice concerns the production, distribution and consumption of discourse (Fairclough, 2025). *Tabayun Gus Dur* brings together previously published writings, interviews and profiles from outlets including Forum Keadilan, Tempo, Matra, Tiara, Prisma and D&R

(Wahid, 1998). Its journalistic material was subsequently selected, edited and organised as a book. Minority discourse therefore reflects interactions among Gus Dur, interviewers and the editor, as well as its circulation through different media.

Many interviews took place in the early 1990s, amid the New Order's limited political openness, debates over succession and the military, and the growing prominence of ICMI. References to restrictions on gatherings and public events, including Forum Demokrasi's *halalbihalal* at Taman Ismail Marzuki, place the discussion within a constrained public sphere. Gus Dur's arguments about democracy and minority protection consequently carried political as well as religious implications.

The Monitor controversy in 1990 provides a central context. The interviews address religious anger, demands to revoke the magazine's SIUPP publishing licence and calls to boycott Kompas and Gramedia. Gus Dur's distinction between the wider Muslim community and a vocal, organised minority responds to this conflict. His concern about harm to religious minorities connects public reactions to the protection of interfaith relations.

a) Source media, target readership and the editing process

The corpus includes question-and-answer interviews, narrative profiles and thematic discussions. The source publications addressed readers interested in political, religious and cultural affairs, while interview topics ranged from succession, elections, ICMI and the military to literature, Sufism and family life. These differences shaped the questions and the contexts in which Gus Dur's statements appeared.

Editorial selection also shapes meaning. Headings such as 'This Country Is Rich in Presidential Candidates' and 'The Monitor Case: Only a Few Are Angry' organise material from different settings into an account of indigenisation, minority rights and cultural reform. The editor thus contributes a framing voice, making connections among statements originally produced on separate occasions.

b) Gus Dur, the interviewer and the editor

Gus Dur's voice appears in his answers, informal Indonesian, conversational particles, local expressions, humour and self-deprecation. This accessible style accompanies firm positions on democracy, freedom and minority protection. His arguments combine classical *fiqh* with criticism of stereotyping, economic generalisation and sectarianism.

The interviewer's voice emerges through questions and introductory descriptions. Questions test Gus Dur's consistency, probe controversies and seek clarification. Descriptions of him as controversial or religiously unorthodox frame his responses in advance. Questions about favouring other faith communities or minorities threatening the majority likewise require him to respond to polarised assumptions.

The editor's voice appears in the selection, sequence and thematic grouping of the material. Interviews about Monitor, sectarianism and non-Muslim protection become part of a wider account of Islam and democracy. Profiles of Gus Dur's workplace, habits and family also connect his public views to a personal context.

c) Implications for discourse analysis concerning minorities

These layers require attention to who speaks, to whom, through which medium and under what political conditions. In the Monitor discussion, concern for minority trauma functions as internal criticism of the Muslim community, opposition to restrictive state responses and reassurance to minority audiences. This interpretation concerns the text's communicative positioning; the study does not directly examine readers' responses.

5) *Socio-Cultural Practices*

Sociocultural analysis relates discourse to social conditions, ideology and power (Fairclough, 2025). In Indonesia's diverse society, Gus Dur challenges the use of identity differences to justify domination and exclusion (Wahid, 1998);(Ardiansyah, 2024).

a) *The Socio-Cultural Reality of Indonesia's Diverse Society*

Gus Dur treats diversity as a social condition requiring fair treatment. His geographical counterexamples to the wealth stereotype highlight differences within minority populations and challenge their treatment as a homogeneous category ((Wahid, 1998), p. 70).

His discussion of indigenous and non-indigenous relations extends this critique to unequal opportunities:

"Then the indigenous and non-indigenous populations blamed one another. The non-indigenous claimed the indigenous were lazy and incompetent. But are those accusations true? The reality is that the indigenous simply did not have the opportunities. Conversely, the indigenous people say that the non-indigenous simply want to dominate. There is some truth in that. But the reality is that their work demonstrates their dedication" (Wahid, 1998, p. 15–16)(Wahid, 1998).

The passage challenges cultural explanations of inequality by drawing attention to access to opportunities. It treats mutual stereotypes as part of a social relationship rather than as fixed characteristics of either group.

b) *The Ideology of Domination and Criticism of Discriminatory Power*

The critique of reciprocal Christianisation and Islamisation accusations identifies sectarianism as a social and political problem. It questions the use of religious identity to legitimise suspicion and unequal treatment ((Wahid, 1998), p. 15).

Gus Dur also challenges restrictions imposed through state power, particularly the revocation of publishing licences:

"I have never agreed with the revocation of any SIUPP. Take it to court; that is the best resolution. During the colonial era, Bung Karno was sentenced by the colonial government, but he presented his defence in Indonesia Menggugat, and that has become the guiding principle for our nation today" ((Wahid, 1998), p. 66).

The passage favours adjudication over administrative suppression. The reference to Bung Karno's *Indonesia Menggugat* connects procedural justice with Indonesia's history of political struggle and provides a local basis for the argument.

c) *Discourse as a Critique of Discriminatory Social Structures*

Stereotyping and unequal representation are linked in this discourse. Generalising from a few wealthy individuals reproduces distorted knowledge about minorities, while equating vocal elites with the majority gives those elites disproportionate authority. Gus Dur challenges both mechanisms and includes himself in the criticism through an inclusive first-person plural ((Wahid, 1998), pp. 63–64, 70).

d) *The Protection of Vulnerable Groups as a Socio-Cultural Imperative*

The fiqh-based obligation to protect Muslims and non-Muslims connects religious tradition with social justice. It presents minority protection as an existing Islamic responsibility rather than a concession to another community ((Wahid, 1998), p. 70).

This obligation also has a socioeconomic dimension. Rejecting the assumption that all minorities are wealthy makes visible those who remain vulnerable and need protection. The

geographical examples challenge a stereotype that can conceal unequal social and economic conditions ((Wahid, 1998), p. 70).

e) *The Democratisation of Religious Life as a Socio-Cultural Project*

By extending concern beyond NU and the Muslim community to the nation, Gus Dur frames minority rights as a shared civic responsibility. Religious solidarity becomes part of a wider commitment to democratic coexistence ((Wahid, 1998), p. 68).

He also argues that democratic responsibility extends beyond political elites:

“The entire nation, not just the bureaucrats. The legislature, after all, isn’t made up of bureaucrats. Yet the legislature remains silent. In East Timor, people are dying, yet they remain silent; meanwhile, organizations like the KNPI have no qualms about getting angry at Australia. Tearing up our flag yes, that is an insult. But we know it’s only a handful of Australians. Why are we acting like children, throwing tantrums?” ((Wahid, 1998), p. 14).

The comparison between anger at Australian provocation and silence over deaths in East Timor challenges selective political concern. The rhetorical question calls for proportionate responses and reflection on the responsibilities of democratic public life.

f) *The Integration of Islamic Values and Local Wisdom in Socio-Cultural Practices*

Gus Dur connects Islamic values with local practices of mutual consideration through tepo seliro:

“The very fabric of our community already understands the importance of looking after one another’s feelings, practising tepo seliro and showing mutual respect. Because this attitude is so fundamental, they do not get too worked up over crazy cases like Arswendo’s” ((Wahid, 1998), p. 64).

This reference gives inclusive social relations a familiar cultural basis. Combined with conversational language, it conveys a broader commitment to justice through forms accessible to local audiences, linking religious values with everyday coexistence.

B. *Islamic Communication Principles in Minority Discourse*

The findings can be interpreted through seven Islamic communication principles: *tabayyun*, *qaulan sadīdan*, *qaulan ma’rūfan*, *qaulan ma’rūfan*, *qaulan balīghan*, *qaulan karīman* and *qaulan maysūran* (Nur, A. N. I. S., 2024). These principles clarify the ethical significance of verification, criticism, accessibility and respect for human dignity in Gus Dur’s discourse (Wijaya, A., & Nur, 2022).

a) *Tabayyun (clarification and verification).*

Tabayyun requires clarification and verification before information is accepted or disseminated. Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 6, provides its scriptural basis:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

“O you who believe! If a wicked person comes to you bearing news, then verify its truth, lest you harm a people out of ignorance, and end up regretting what you have done” (Surah Al-Hujurat: 6)

Ibn Kathir (2010) explains that verification prevents harm caused by unreliable information. Gus Dur’s rejection of the minority wealth stereotype applies this concern to intergroup judgements: his counterexamples invite examination of social conditions before generalising about an entire population ((Wahid, 1998), p. 70).

b) *Qaulan sadīdan (Truthful Speech)*

Qaulan sadīdan relates to truthful and honest communication. Allah SWT states in Surah Al-Ahzab, verse 70:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

“O you who have believed! Fear Allah and speak the truth” (Surah Al-Ahzab: 70).

(Katsir, 2000) interprets *qaulan sadīdan* as truthful, straightforward speech consistent with reality. It requires integrity and accountability in communication.

Gus Dur’s criticism of licence revocation illustrates his willingness to state a position on the use of power and call for a legal resolution ((Wahid, 1998) p. 66). This openness connects his political discourse with the ethical responsibility to address public concerns.

c) *Qaulan Ma’rūfan (Kind Words)*

Qaulan ma’rūfan emphasises kind and appropriate speech. Allah SWT states in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 83:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ

“And (remember) when We took a covenant from the Children of Israel: ‘You shall not worship anyone but Allah, and be kind to your parents, your relatives, orphans and the poor. And speak kindly to people’” (Surah Al-Baqarah: 83).

(Katsir, 2000) explains *qaulan hasanan* as speech that is kind, beneficial and avoids harm. This supports a communication ethic that respects human dignity.

Gus Dur’s criticism of reciprocal religious accusations can be read through this principle. It challenges communication that demeans another community and calls attention to the damage caused by sectarian framing ((Wahid, 1998), p. 15; Nur et al., 2024).

d) *Qaulan ma’rūfan (Gentle Words)*

Qaulan ma’rūfan refers to conveying a message gently. Allah SWT states in Surah Taha, verse 44:

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ

“So speak to him with gentle words, in the hope that he may take heed or fear” (Surah Taha: 44).

(Katsir, 2000) explains that Moses and Aaron were instructed to address Pharaoh gently despite his tyranny. The principle supports persuasive communication. In interpreting Gus Dur’s discourse, it helps explain the use of conversational language and humour to convey criticism without abandoning engagement with the audience.

e) *Qaulan Balighan (Effective Speech)*

Qaulan balighan refers to a message that is effective and capable of achieving its communicative purpose. Allah SWT states in Surah An-Nisa, verse 63:

أُولَئِكَ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُلْ لَهُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًا بَلِيغًا

“Those are the people of whom Allah knows what is in their hearts. Therefore, turn away from them, admonish them, and speak to them with words that leave a lasting impression on their souls” (Surah An-Nisa’: 63).

(Katsir, 2000) interprets *qaulan balighan* as clear, precise speech that reaches its audience. The principle concerns communicative effectiveness.

Gus Dur’s shift from communal concerns to national responsibility seeks to change how audiences understand minority rights ((Wahid, 1998), p. 68). This persuasive orientation connects his discourse on democracy and pluralism with *qaulan balighan* (Nur, A. N. I. S., 2024);(Ardiansyah, 2024).

f) *Qaulan karīman (Noble Words)*

Qaulan karīman embodies the principle of respect and honour towards humanity. Allah SWT states in Surah Al-Isra’, verse 23:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا

كَرِيمًا

“And your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him and that you be kind to your parents. If either or both reach old age whilst in your care, do not say ‘Uff’ to them, nor rebuke them, but speak to them with honour” (Quran 17:23).

(Katsir, 2000) interprets *qaulan karīman* as honourable speech that respects human dignity.

The fiqh argument for protecting Muslims and non-Muslims places differences in religious identity within a shared obligation of respect ((Wahid, 1998), p. 70). Read through *qaulan karīman*, it opposes the use of communication to demean minority groups (Nur, A. N. I. S., 2024);(Rianti, 2021)).

g) *Qaulan maysūran (Words that are Easy to Understand)*

Qaulan maysuran refers to conveying a message that is easily understood and makes things easier for the listener. Allah SWT states in Surah Al-Isra’ verse 28:

وَإِمَّا تُعْرِضَنَّ عَنْهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَيْسُورًا

“And if you turn away from them in order to seek mercy from your Lord, which you hope for, then speak to them with gentle words” (Surah Al-Isra’: 28).

(Katsir, 2000) interprets *qaulan maysūran* as speech that offers ease rather than burden. In communication, the principle directs attention to accessibility.

Gus Dur’s conversational style and reference to tepo seliro make complex social and religious arguments accessible through familiar language ((Wahid, 1998), p. 64). This provides a basis for interpreting his discourse through *qaulan maysūran* (Nur, A. N. I. S., 2024);(Ardiansyah, 2024).

h) *Epistemological Connections between Islamic Communication and CDA*

Tabayyun provides an ethical reason to verify representations of other groups, while microstructural analysis examines how linguistic choices construct those representations (Van Dijk, 1995). Gus Dur’s challenge to stereotyping illustrates this connection: the call to examine evidence is both a textual strategy and an ethical orientation ((Wahid, 1998), p. 70).

Qaulan sadīdan similarly directs attention to the accountability of public claims. Macrostructural analysis identifies procedural justice as a broader theme in Gus Dur's opposition to licence revocation (Anam & Kusumawati, 2023); (Wahid, 1998), p. 66). The ethical and analytical perspectives remain distinct but can inform the same interpretation.

i) *Critical Dimensions in the Principles of Islamic Communication*

Islamic communication principles can support criticism of discriminatory power rather than function only as rules of politeness (Fairclough, 2025). In this reading, *qaulan ma'rūfan* helps interpret the rejection of sectarian accusations as a challenge to discourse that polarises religious communities.

Qaulan karīman also draws attention to how groups are represented and valued. This concern connects with the social-cognitive dimension of CDA, which examines the formation and reproduction of group representations (Abu Bakar et al., 2024). The fiqh-based defence of non-Muslims challenges representations that exclude them from protection ((Wahid, 1998), p. 70).

j) *Rhetorical Strategies as the Operationalisation of Principles*

Informal language, humour and *tepo seliro* provide rhetorical means of conveying criticism in familiar terms (Keraf, 1980). Their use helps explain how *qaulan ma'rūfan* and *qaulan maysūran* may be expressed in discourse without weakening the argument.

The movement from religious solidarity to national responsibility illustrates the persuasive orientation associated with *qaulan balīghan* (Sobur, 2006); (Wahid, 1998), p. 68). This is an interpretation of the text's strategy, not an empirical measure of its effects on audiences.

k) *Normative and Analytical Integration*

Islamic communication provides normative criteria for evaluating justice and dignity, while CDA examines how discourse reproduces or challenges power (Wijaya, 2022). For example, analysis identifies the invitation to inspect minority communities as an imperative; *tabayyun* explains its ethical relevance to preventing unverified prejudice (Nur, A. N. I. S., 2024).

l) *Contributions to the Development of Islamic Communication Theory*

This integration connects Islamic communication principles with observable textual features, including pronouns, sentence forms, argument sequences and rhetorical choices (Ardiansyah, 2024). It extends their application to public debates on pluralism and minority rights and offers an interpretative approach to communication oriented towards social justice (Rianti, 2021).

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis of *Tabayyun* Gus Dur shows that Abdurrahman Wahid constructs minority discourse through pluralism, equality, democracy, tolerance and protection of vulnerable groups. Its macrostructure frames minority rights as a national responsibility and challenges sectarianism and unrepresentative claims by vocal groups. Its superstructure develops these arguments through diagnosis–solution sequences, movement from cases to principles, fiqh-based legitimation and distinctions between the wider community and vocal elites.

At the microstructural level, inclusive pronouns, conversational language, rhetorical questions, humour and invitations to verify claims support this critical orientation. Discursive analysis situates these features within interactions among Gus Dur, interviewers and the editor under the New Order. Sociocultural analysis connects them to stereotypes, unequal opportunities and discriminatory power. The Islamic communication perspective interprets these findings through *tabayyun* and the six *qaulan* principles discussed above.

The study contributes an approach for relating Islamic communication ethics to specific discursive practices. It shows how textual analysis can examine the expression of verification, dignity, inclusion and criticism of domination in public communication.

The analysis is limited to one primary volume and does not empirically assess public reception. Future studies could compare Gus Dur's other works, investigate audience interpretations and examine how this communication principles operate in digital debates involving disinformation and intolerance.

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