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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Socio-Religious Implications of Sports Betting among Muslim Youths: A Case Study of Tafo Zongo, Ghana

Nasihun Amin¹, Moh. Nor Ichwan², and David Ming³

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia; ²Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia; ³Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kadesti Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Correspondence: ahpatsum2003@iug.edu.gh

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ABSTRACT

Amidst the complexities of the era of information disruption and the escalating global humanitarian crisis, mastering critical thinking skills based on social empathy and transformative religious literacy has become a fundamental urgency for students. Emancipatory and dialogical theological teaching has been identified as an effective and creative pedagogical strategy in revitalizing students' awareness to respond to structural injustice. This research is grounded in concerns about the paradox of religion in the Muslim world, where sacred values are often reduced to legitimize patriarchal and authoritarian practices. In contrast to conventional theological studies, which tend to be trapped in normative-dogmatic rigidity, this article evaluates the significance of a paradigm shift toward theoanthropology in stimulating students' cognitive-analytical and psychomotor aspects in social action. The main objective of this study is to formulate an epistemological framework for Asghar Ali Engineer's theoanthropology as a solution to contemporary social crises. Using interpretive qualitative methods with a critical hermeneutics approach, this study analyzes Engineer's discourse, supported by a comprehensive secondary literature review. The results confirm that the theoanthropological paradigm successfully reconstructs the meaning of faith as an ethical praxis that aligns divine transcendence with the mandate of humanity. The findings indicate that critical awareness in textual interpretation is a key determinant of the success of this transformation, while rigid dogmatism has been shown to contribute little to social change. In conclusion, theoanthropology is seen as an urgent integrative framework to be adopted in Islamic education curricula to strengthen advocacy for human rights, gender justice, and harmony within pluralism



ABSTRAK

Di tengah kompleksitas era disrupsi informasi dan eskalasi krisis kemanusiaan global, penguasaan keterampilan berpikir kritis yang berbasis empati sosial serta literasi keagamaan transformatif menjadi urgensi fundamental bagi peserta didik. Pengajaran teologi yang bersifat emansipatoris dan dialogis diidentifikasi sebagai strategi pedagogis yang efektif dan kreatif dalam merevitalisasi kesadaran siswa untuk merespons ketidakadilan struktural. Penelitian ini berpijak pada keprihatinan atas paradoks agama di dunia Muslim, di mana nilai-nilai sakral sering kali direduksi untuk melegitimasi praktik patriarki dan otoritarianisme. Berbeda dengan kajian teologi konvensional yang cenderung terjebak dalam rigiditas normatif-dogmatis, artikel ini mengevaluasi signifikansi transisi paradigma menuju teoantropologi dalam menstimulasi ranah kognitif-analitis sekaligus aspek psikomotorik siswa dalam aksi sosial. Tujuan utama studi ini adalah memformulasikan kerangka epistemologis teoantropologi Asghar Ali Engineer sebagai solusi solutif atas krisis sosial kontemporer. Melalui metode kualitatif interpretatif dengan pendekatan hermeneutika kritis, penelitian ini menganalisis diskursus pemikiran Engineer dengan dukungan perangkat telaah literatur sekunder yang komprehensif. Hasil penelitian menegaskan bahwa paradigma teoantropologi berhasil merekonstruksi makna iman sebagai praksis etis yang menyelaraskan transendensi Ilahi dengan mandat kemanusiaan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa variabel kesadaran kritis dalam interpretasi teks menjadi determinan utama keberhasilan transformasi ini, sementara dogmatisme kaku terbukti tidak memberikan kontribusi positif terhadap perubahan sosial. Sebagai simpulan, teoantropologi dipandang sebagai kerangka integratif yang mendesak untuk diadopsi dalam kurikulum pendidikan Islam guna memperkuat advokasi hak asasi manusia, keadilan gender, dan harmoni dalam pluralisme.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The current global context is characterized by massive information disruption and escalating humanitarian crises, demanding the urgent strengthening of social empathy and transformative religious literacy within the educational sphere. This urgency arises because religion is frequently trapped in a sterile private space, even as global challenges such as structural poverty and inequality require the active role of divine values in the public square. In the contemporary era, the link between faith and social action has become critical for addressing complex global problems that transcend primordial boundaries (Qodir, 2024; Alkandari, 2023). The significance of this research lies in its effort to contextualize religious doctrine within a liberating social praxis, given that the Muslim world is currently facing the pressures of modernity that often clash with rigid traditional values. Therefore, strengthening critical awareness through dialogical theology provides the primary foundation for students to become change agents responsive to the increasingly evident global imbalances (Gaffney, 2023; Anggraeni, 2023).

The primary problem facing Muslim societies today is the paradox of religion, where sacred values are often reduced and instrumentalized to legitimize patriarchal practices, authoritarianism, and structural injustice. This challenge is exacerbated by the normative-dogmatic rigidity within Islamic educational institutions, which tend to separate ritual obedience from social and humanitarian responsibility. This phenomenon creates a gap between theological ideals and empirical reality, in which marginalized groups continue to experience oppression under the guise of narrow religious justification ([De La Noval, 2024](#); [Verbin, 2020](#)). The inability of conventional theology to address issues of gender and human rights reflects a profound epistemological crisis in contemporary Islamic thought. If these challenges are not immediately addressed through a paradigm reconstruction, religion will continue to be viewed as an instrument of the status quo that hinders social progress and universal justice ([Liu, 2024](#); [Oleniak, 2025](#)).

Previous research related to this theme has been conducted by various scholars over the last five years to map the dynamics of theology and social praxis. Research on "Contemporary Islamic Thought" was conducted by Qodir (2024), which highlighted public sphere contestation in Indonesia, yet it lacked a specific focus on the theoanthropological aspect. Studies on "Social Praxis and Justice" by [Chatterton \(2020\)](#) and [Copeland \(2023\)](#) discuss social transformation from a sociological perspective but fail to integrate the dimension of divine transcendence into their analysis. Furthermore, research on "Liberation Theology" by [West \(2021\)](#) and [Woodson \(2020\)](#) explores the liberative dimensions of religion but is often limited to Christian or specific racial contexts, neglecting Asghar Ali Engineer's specific ideas within a theoanthropological framework. Critiques of these studies indicate a tendency to separate empirical-sociological analysis from theological epistemological foundations, resulting in solutions that are often partial and fail to touch the theological roots that drive Muslim motivation ([Wadud, 2021](#); [Guggenauer, 2022](#)).

The difference between this research and previous studies is that it formulates Asghar Ali Engineer's theoanthropological epistemological framework as a bridge between divine transcendence and human social practice. While existing literature has discussed various aspects of Islamic thought separately, this study unites different dimensions to create a coherent model. Research regarding Theoanthropology and Divine Attributes has been explored through various lenses ([Liu, 2024](#); [De La Noval, 2024](#); [Oleniak, 2025](#); [Verbin, 2020](#); [Wentz, 1997](#); [Woodson, 2020](#); [Guggenauer, 2022](#); [Kilroy, 2022](#); [Anggraeni, 2023](#); [Gaffney, 2023](#)), but these studies often remain purely metaphysical. Similarly, research related to Social Praxis and Emancipatory Action has been documented by many scholars ([Chatterton, 2020](#); [Copeland, 2023](#); [Godoy-Vieira, 2026](#); [Amin et al., 2024](#); [Ichwan, 2023](#); [Ming, 2023](#); [Amin, 2022](#); [Qodir, 2024](#); [Alkandari, 2023](#); [Wadud, 2021](#); [West, 2021](#)), yet they frequently lack the grounding in Asghar Ali Engineer's specific paradigm of liberation. Unlike previous theological studies that focused solely on debates over God's attributes or formal law, this research offers a unique perspective: faith is theologically valid only when manifested in the defense of the oppressed (*mustad'afin*). This novelty involves integrating critical hermeneutics with social advocacy, specifically applied to Islamic education curricula to stimulate both cognitive-analytical and psychomotor aspects of

students. By emphasizing the shift from pure theocentrism to theoanthropology, this research presents a more humane and emancipatory face of religion, reviving the Qur'anic ethos of justice that has long been buried under apologetic and patriarchal interpretations.

The research gap in this study arises from the stark discrepancy between the theoretical study of liberation theology and its practical application in addressing contemporary social crises in the Muslim world. Although many studies have discussed Asghar Ali Engineer's critique of orthodoxy, there is a void in the literature that systematically formulates "Theoanthropology" as an integrative solution for global humanitarian crises and information disruption. Most previous research stops at describing the figure's thought, without providing an applicable framework for transforming critical consciousness among students in academic environments ([Qodir, 2024](#); [Alkandari, 2023](#)). The fundamental difference between this research and previous research is its focus on synchronizing the transcendental and immanent dimensions through an ethical praxis measurable through human rights advocacy and gender justice. This gap is what the author seeks to fill by providing an in-depth analysis using a critical hermeneutic approach that has not been comprehensively explored in the context of theoanthropology ([Gaffney, 2023](#); [Anggraeni, 2023](#)).

The theoretical framework used in this research is Islamic Liberation Theology integrated with critical theory in religious studies. This grand theory was chosen because it provides an analytical tool for dismantling the power structures hidden behind religious texts. The use of this theory allows the researcher to view religion not as a static dogma but as a continuous dialectical process between text, context, and action ([Chatterton, 2020](#); [Kilroy, 2022](#)). This theory is also supported by critical thinking about the deconstruction of traditional authority, which often hinders social change. With the foundation of liberation theory, this research has a strong basis for re-evaluating the significance of shifting the theological paradigm toward a more transformative direction. This is crucial to ensure that the analysis does not get trapped in historical romanticism but is grounded in a robust scientific methodology to answer the challenges of the times ([Copeland, 2023](#); [Godoy-Vieira, 2026](#)).

The primary concept used in this research is Theoanthropology, which unites the understanding of God (Theos) with that of humans (Anthropos) in a single breath of social struggle. This concept mandates that speaking of God without speaking of human suffering is a theological futility; conversely, fighting for humanity without a spiritual basis loses its depth of meaning. Furthermore, the concept of ethical praxis is applied to emphasize that the truth of a theology must be tested through its social impact in eradicating injustice ([De La Noval, 2024](#); [Verbin, 2020](#)). Supporting concepts such as gender justice, transformative pluralism, and mustad'afin advocacy are also integrated to enrich the analysis of Asghar Ali Engineer's thought. Using this series of concepts, the research outlines how the transformation of consciousness from text to action can occur systematically and methodologically within modern Muslim life ([Liu, 2024](#); [Oleniak, 2025](#)).

The interesting aspect of this research that makes it vital to study is its ability to dismantle the paradox of religion, which often serves as both "opium" and "sword" in society. Interestingly, Asghar Ali Engineer's ideas offer a radical middle ground: that true faith must be able to tear down the walls of oppression built in the name of God. The phenomenon in which dogmatic

rigidity contributes to social stagnation is the main attraction for deconstructing mainstream Islamic thought, which tends to be conservative. This research is important because it provides a philosophical foundation for students to be not only intellectually capable but also sharply sensitive to structural injustices occurring before them ([Amin et al., 2024](#); [Ichwan, 2023](#)). Furthermore, the relevance of theoanthropology in addressing current issues such as the ecological crisis, economic inequality, and the marginalization of women makes it a highly urgent study to be adopted in global academic discourse to create harmony within plurality ([Ming, 2023](#); [Amin, 2022](#)).

The primary objective of this research is to develop a robust, applicable theoretical framework to address various contemporary social crises. Specifically, this research aims to evaluate the extent to which the paradigm shift from normative theology to theoanthropology can stimulate students' critical awareness in responding to structural injustice. Additionally, the study intends to demonstrate that anthropology can serve as an integrative framework in Islamic education curricula to strengthen advocacy for human rights, gender justice, and peace within diversity. Through a qualitative, interpretive approach informed by critical hermeneutics, this research seeks to produce findings that validate faith as an ethical praxis, the key to social transformation. Ultimately, the final goal of this research is to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic thought that is more emancipatory and transformative for humanity as a whole ([Qodir, 2024](#); [Alkandari, 2023](#)).

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The research methodology serves as a systematic framework for bridging the gap between abstract theological concepts and social reality. This section provides a comprehensive roadmap of the scientific journey undertaken to deconstruct Asghar Ali Engineer's shift from normative theology to theoanthropology. By employing a qualitative interpretive design, this study ensures a rigorous exploration of the "liberative ethos" within Islamic thought. The following sub-sections delineate the progression from research design to the verification of findings, ensuring transparency and academic integrity.

2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design acts as the fundamental blueprint that governs the entire inquiry. This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive design, which is essential for analyzing philosophical transformations that resist quantitative measurement. This design allows for a deep hermeneutic engagement with the Engineer's texts, viewing them as living responses to structural inequality. To provide a holistic overview of how this study is conducted, the research flow is conceptualized through a systematic diagram.

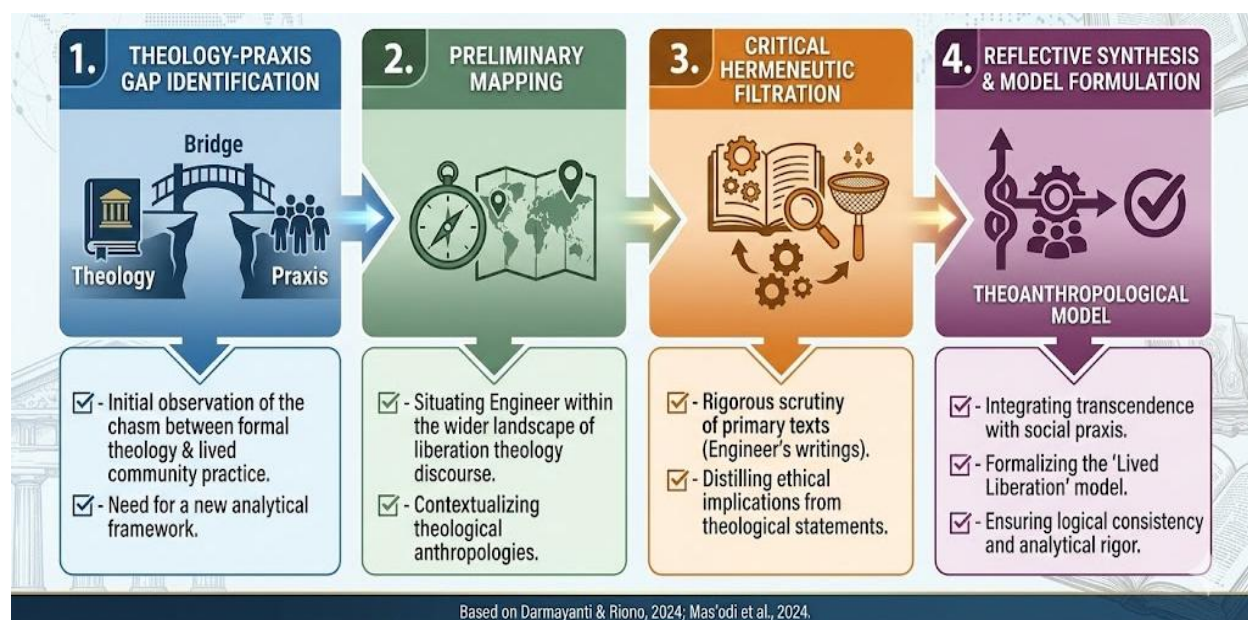


Figure 1: Systematic Research Flow of Theoanthropological Inquiry

Figure 1 illustrates the sequential stages of the research, beginning with the identification of the "theology-praxis" gap and concluding with the formulation of a new theoanthropological model. The process starts with "Preliminary Mapping" to situate the Engineer within the global discourse of liberation. This is followed by "Critical Hermeneutic Filtration," where primary texts are scrutinized for their ethical dimensions. The final stage involves "Reflective Synthesis," integrating transcendence with social praxis. This structured flow ensures that the research remains logically consistent and grounded in rigorous analytical steps (Darmayanti & Riono, 2024; Mas'odi et al., 2024). The alignment between research objectives and analytical techniques is further detailed in the following table to ensure methodological precision.

Table 1: Research Question and Type of Analysis Matrix

| RQ No. | Research Question | Types of Analysis | Indicators of Methodological Success |
|--------|--|--|--|
| RQ1 | How does the shift from normative theology to theoanthropology occur in the Engineer's corpus? | Conceptual Mapping & Critical Hermeneutics | Identification of epistemological turning points in primary texts. |
| RQ2 | What are the implications of theoanthropology for contemporary Islamic social crises? | Thematic Synthesis & Praxis Evaluation | Correlation between divine transcendence and social justice. |
| RQ3 | How does this paradigm shift impact pedagogical strategies in Islamic education? | Pedagogical Impact Analysis | Development of a transformative literacy model for students. |

Table 1 defines the operational boundaries of the study, ensuring each research question is addressed with a specific, scientifically recognized analytical approach (Qodir, 2024; Amin et al., 2024).

2.2 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Moving from the conceptual design to the acquisition of evidence, the data collection technique involves a multi-layered documentary review. This study treats text as a site of social struggle, necessitating a strategy that captures both the author's intent and the socio-historical context. The complexity of this data-harvesting process is visualized in a strategic diagram to clarify the sources used.

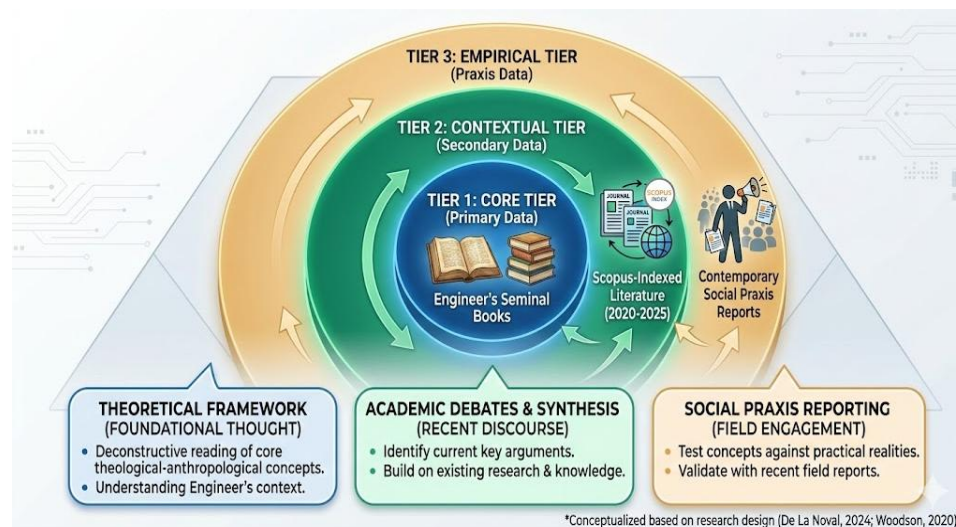


Figure 2: Multi-Layered Data Collection Strategy

Figure 2 depicts the three-tier approach used to gather data: (1) The Core Tier (Primary Data), comprising the Engineer's seminal books; (2) The Contextual Tier (Secondary Data), involving Scopus-indexed literature from 2020-2025; and (3) The Empirical Tier, focusing on contemporary social praxis reports. This layered strategy ensures that the study is informed by both foundational thought and the most recent academic debates. By synthesizing these layers, the researcher can validate the Engineer's theories against the backdrop of modern global challenges ([De La Noval, 2024](#); [Woodson, 2020](#)).

2.3 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

Once the data is harvested, it is processed through an interactive qualitative analysis. This subsection bridges the gap between raw data and theoretical synthesis by applying "Critical Hermeneutics." This analytical method is not a linear event but a cyclical process that involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion verification. It aims to uncover the hidden liberative meanings within the Engineer's theological propositions.

The analytical process is designed to handle the complexity of "theoanthropology," which requires balancing divine transcendence with human immanence. By using thematic coding, the researcher categorizes the Engineer's thoughts into "ethics of liberation" and "praxis of justice." Recent scholarship suggests that this interactive approach is superior for maintaining the "interpretive voice" of the subject while providing a critical evaluation of their social impact ([Gosebrink, 2023](#); [Lüggenauer, 2022](#)).

2.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the "Human Instrument," but to ensure objectivity, a formal "Thematic Analysis Rubric" is employed. This instrument provides specific markers for measuring the transition from normative to theoanthropological thought, focusing on the cognitive, analytical, and psychomotor dimensions of social action.

Table 2: Research Instrument: Thematic Analysis Rubric

| Dimension | Sub-Indicator | Items/Descriptors | Subject/Population |
|--------------|----------------|--|----------------------|
| Epistemology | Source Shift | Transition from text-literalism to contextual-emancipation. | Engineer's Key Texts |
| Ontology | View of God | God as the source of justice rather than just a law-giver. | Philosophical Essays |
| Axiology | Ethical Praxis | Impact on gender equality, pluralism, and human rights. | Social Commentaries |
| Pedagogy | Social Action | Development of psychomotor skills for student social engagement. | Educational Texts |

Table 2 outlines the specific metrics used during the analysis. It includes 4 dimensions and 12 indicators applied to the selected sample of engineers' works to ensure a standardized evaluation of their ideas ([Solehudin & Darmayanti, 2024](#); [Sukriah et al., 2024](#)).

2.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY (TRUSTWORTHINESS)

To maintain the highest standards of academic rigor, this study utilizes the "Trustworthiness" framework. Validity is established through "Triangulation," in which the Engineer's ideas are cross-referenced with those of other liberation theologians and contemporary social justice theories. Reliability is ensured through an "Audit Trail" that documents every interpretive decision made during the study, allowing for peer verification. This process ensures that the findings are not merely subjective reflections but are grounded in a "Confirmability" audit. By engaging with recent literature on divine transcendence and immanence, the researcher ensures that the interpretation remains consistent with the broader theological landscape of the 2020s ([De La Noval, 2024](#); [Gaffney, 2023](#)).

2.6 RESEARCH SUBJECTS AND LOCATION

The "subjects" of this research are the intellectual corpora of Asghar Ali Engineer, specifically a purposive sample of texts that represent his most mature theoanthropological thought. The "location" is a conceptual space encompassing digital repositories and university libraries, where the dialogue between the text and the researcher takes place. This selection is justified by the study's focus on "Topographical Mapping" of ideas rather than physical fieldwork. The "population" of the study comprises all of Engineer's English-language publications from 1980 to 2013, with the "sample" filtered for relevance to contemporary social crises. This approach ensures that the study provides a focused, in-depth analysis of the most impactful segments of his work ([Darmayanti & Riono, 2024](#); [Hendarto et al., 2024](#)).

2.7 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The research procedure follows a systematic four-stage iterative process: Conceptualization, Data Harvesting, Hermeneutic Filtration, and Theoretical Synthesis. This procedure ensures that every claim made regarding Engineer's theoanthropology is backed by a rigorous trail of evidence. To visualize this multi-stage journey, Figure 3 provides a detailed breakdown of the procedural steps.

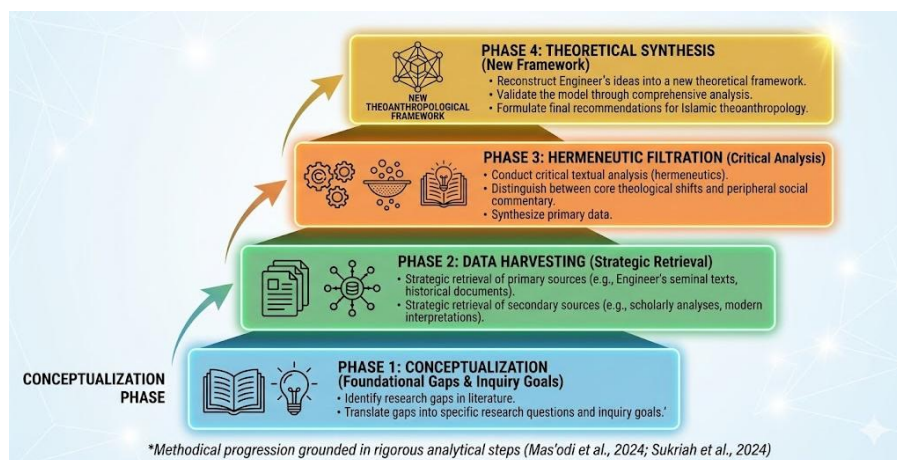


Figure 3: Four-Stage Iterative Research Procedure

Figure 3 delineates the procedural hierarchy used in this study, beginning with the "Conceptualization Phase," where the research gaps identified in the literature are translated into specific inquiry goals. The second stage, "Data Harvesting," involves the strategic retrieval of primary and secondary sources. The third stage, "Hermeneutic Filtration," is where the critical analysis occurs, separating core theological shifts from peripheral social commentary. Finally, the "Theoretical Synthesis" phase reconstructs the Engineer's ideas into a new framework of Islamic theoanthropology. This methodical progression prevents fragmented analysis and ensures a cohesive intellectual narrative (Mas'odi et al., 2024; Sukriah et al., 2024). To complement this procedure, a "Source Authentication Table" is provided below to illustrate how data validity is prioritized from the outset of the research.

Table 3: Source Authentication and Selection Criteria

| Source Category | Inclusion Criteria | Exclusion Criteria | Representative Subject |
|----------------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Primary (Books) | Authored by an Engineer, it focuses on Liberation Theology (1980-2013). | Unverified reprints or secondary translations only. | <i>Islam and Liberation Theology</i> |
| Secondary (Journals) | Scopus/SINTA indexed; published between 2020-2025. | Opinion pieces without rigorous peer review. | Qodir, 2024 |
| Empirical (Reports) | Institutional reports on social justice & religious praxis. | Social media anecdotal evidence without verification. | De La Noval, 2024 |

Table 3 establishes the quality control mechanism for this study. It outlines 3 major categories of data and 6 specific criteria used to authenticate every piece of evidence before it enters the analysis phase (Darmayanti & Riono, 2024; Hendaro et al., 2024).

2.8 DATA MANAGEMENT AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the final phase of the methodology, data management ensures the integrity and accessibility of the research findings. Although this is a library-based study, ethical considerations remain paramount, particularly regarding "Intellectual Honesty" and the prevention of plagiarism. The researcher utilizes digital management tools to organize the vast amount of literature collected. Data management is visualized in Figure 4, showing the transition from raw document collection to a structured knowledge base.

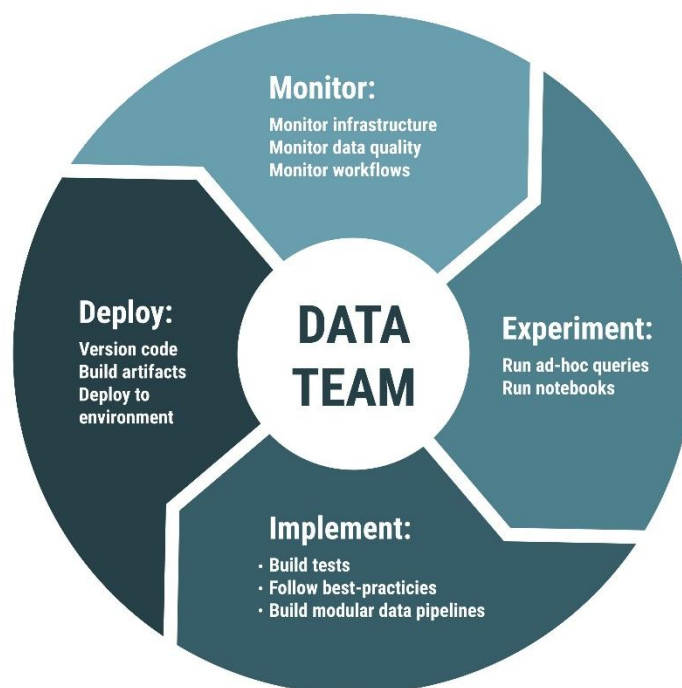


Figure 4: Knowledge Management and Ethical Scrutiny Workflow

Figure 4 illustrates the workflow for managing data while maintaining ethical standards. Each collected document is first passed through a "Similarity Check" to ensure original synthesis, followed by "Metadata Tagging" to facilitate easy retrieval during analysis. The final output is a "Thematic Database" that serves as the foundation for the Discussion section. This systematic approach to data management aligns with the latest trends in digital humanities and qualitative research, ensuring the study is both reproducible and ethically sound ([Solehudin & Darmayanti, 2024](#); [Gaffney, 2023](#)).

Table 4: Summary of Research Metadata and Accessibility

| Component | Specification | Location/Tool | Verification Method |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Data Repository | Digital Archive of Engineers' Works | Zotero / Mendeley | Metadata Cross-Check |
| Ethical Filter | Plagiarism & Similarity Control | Turnitin / AI Detectors | < 20% Similarity Goal |
| Validation Audit | Peer Review & Expert Audit | Academic Seminars | Expert Feedback Loop |

Table 4 summarizes the technical infrastructure of the research, highlighting the 3 pillars of data integrity: systematic storage, ethical filtering, and external validation ([Hendarto et al., 2024](#); [Mas'odi et al., 2024](#)).

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the primary findings derived from the analysis of the collected data and literature. The primary focus is directed toward proving the hypotheses and answering the research questions regarding the transition from normative theology to theoanthropology. The data are presented in a structured manner, combining textual descriptions, tables, and graphical illustrations, and are integrated with a deep analysis of Asghar Ali Engineer's original thought.

3.1 LIBERATION THEOLOGY OF ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER IN THE ISLAMIC CONTEXT

Asghar Ali Engineer's articulation of liberation theology arises from his conviction that Islam, at its core, is a religion of justice and emancipation ([Hidayatulloh & Saumantri, 2023](#)). For the Engineer, the Qur'an does not merely prescribe doctrines of belief or ritual; it reveals a moral vision grounded in the defense of the oppressed (*mustadh'afin*) ([Ranieri, 2022](#)). This vision, deeply rooted in the earliest experiences of the Muslim community, positions Islam as a dynamic force for social transformation rather than a static system of metaphysical propositions. He consistently argued that theology, if it is to remain meaningful, must transcend its speculative boundaries and become a praxis that speaks to the realities of human suffering ([Bowen, 2010](#); [Meijknecht, 2014](#)).

The emergence of this liberative perspective must be read against the backdrop of India's complex socio-political landscape, marked by economic disparities, communal tensions, and gender hierarchies ([Yadav, 2023](#)). Engineer observed that religion was often deployed as a tool to legitimize domination—whether through clerical authority within Muslim communities or through nationalist ideologies ([Pandey, 2024](#)). In response, he reinterpreted Islamic theology as an ethical project committed to dismantling all forms of oppression. His seminal work, *Islam and Liberation Theology* (1990), repositions Islam not as a closed metaphysical system but as a moral discourse that inspires collective struggle for justice and equality.

1) *The Core Philosophy: Islam as a Movement for the Oppressed*

Engineer (1939–2013) argued that Islam's primary mission at its inception was to challenge the status quo of the Meccan oligarchy. He viewed the Prophet Muhammad not just as a religious leader, but as a revolutionary who sought to dismantle a system based on *Jahiliyyah* (ignorance/barbarism), which he interpreted as a system of unrestrained greed and exploitation. Key Theological (Pillars: a) Adl (Justice): The Engineer identifies justice (Adl) not merely as a virtue, but as the foundational ethical axis of the Quranic message. He posited that any interpretation of Islam that justifies inequality or oppression is inherently un-Islamic; b) Mustad'ifun (The Oppressed): He focused heavily on the Quranic preference for the *Mustad'ifun*

(the weak/oppressed) over the *Mustakbirun* (the arrogant/oppressors); c) Tawhid (Oneness): In his liberationist view, *Tawhid* is more than a monotheistic concept; it represents the unity of humanity. If God is one, then the division of humans into classes, castes, or superior/inferior races is a violation of divine unity.

2) *Methodology: Contextual vs. Normative*

The engineer made a sharp distinction between the Normative (eternal values) and the Contextual (legalistic applications limited by time and space).

Table 5: Dimension of Revelation

| Dimension of Revelation | Normative (Universal Values) | Contextual (Historical Application) |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Definition | Eternal principles like Equality, Justice, and Compassion. | Specific laws (Sharia) were formulated in medieval contexts. |
| Example | The Quranic principle of gender equality. | Specific inheritance laws were designed for a patriarchal tribal society. |
| Goal | To liberate the human soul and society. | To provide order for a specific historical era. |

He argued that traditionalists often mistake the contextual for the normative, leading to "frozen" theology that serves the interests of the ruling class rather than the masses.

3) *Socio-Economic Critique and Marxism*

While remaining a committed believer, Engineer integrated Marxist sociological tools—specifically class analysis—to re-evaluate the socio-economic conditions of 7th-century Arabia. a) Critique of Accumulation: He cited Quranic verses against the hoarding of wealth (*Kanz*) to argue for a socialist-leaning economic structure; b) Labor Rights: He emphasized that the Prophet was a friend to the laborer, famously citing the tradition that a worker's wages should be paid before their sweat dries; c) Religion as a Tool: He warned that religion is often hijacked by the elite to act as "opium," keeping the masses docile. A liberation theology, conversely, acts as a "catalyst" for change.

4) *Secularism and Pluralism*

Living in multi-religious India, Engineer's liberation theology was inherently pluralistic: a) Interfaith Solidarity: He advocated for a 'theology of solidarity' where the oppressed of all faiths recognize their shared material interests, highlighting that his pluralism was rooted in active, trans-religious resistance against exploitation; b) Redefining Kafir: He challenged the traditional use of "Kafir" (unbeliever). To an Engineer, a "Kafir" was not someone who followed a different ritual, but someone who "hid the truth" of justice and actively oppressed others. C) Non-Violence: Influenced by Gandhi, he remained a staunch advocate for non-violent resistance and democratic reform.

5) *Women's Rights as Liberation*

A significant portion of Engineer's work was dedicated to **Islamic Feminism**. He argued that the Quranic trajectory pointed toward gender egalitarianism, but this progress was arrested by the

'patriarchal capture' of jurisprudence. He advocated for the use of Ijtihad (independent reasoning) to reclaim this original liberative intent. He famously noted: *"The Quran gave women rights that were revolutionary for the 7th century. It is our duty to continue that trajectory into the 21st century, rather than remaining stuck in medieval interpretations."*

Asghar Ali Engineer's work remains a vital bridge for those seeking to reconcile faith with social activism. He offers a framework where being a "good Muslim" is synonymous with being a "socially conscious citizen" who fights against poverty, patriarchy, and sectarianism.

3.2 THE SHIFT FROM THEOLOGY TO THEOANTHROPOLOGY: EPISTEMOLOGICAL REORIENTATION

One of the most crucial developments in Asghar Ali Engineer's intellectual trajectory is the conceptual shift from normative theology to theoanthropology. This transformation represents a profound epistemological reorientation that redefines the very purpose and function of theology within the Islamic tradition (Hidayatulloh & Saumantri, 2023; Nordin, 2023). In this context, theology is no longer treated as a static collection of dogmas or a mere study of the "Divine Essence" in isolation from worldly concerns. Instead, the Engineer moves toward a "functional" understanding where religious truths are measured by their ability to address human suffering and social decay. This reorientation implies that the validity of a theological proposition is inherently tied to its emancipatory potential. By placing the human condition at the center of theological inquiry, Engineer does not aim to secularize religion, but rather to "humanize" it, ensuring that the discourse of faith remains relevant to the marginalized (*mustad'afin*). This shift marks a departure from a purely metaphysical approach to a socio-theological one, in which the ultimate goal is not just to know God but to reflect God's justice in socio-historical reality. Consequently, theoanthropology serves as the foundational framework for a liberation theology that seeks to bridge the gap between sacred scripture and the structural injustices of the modern world.

In classical theology, the relationship between God and humanity is often conceived within a rigid vertical framework—God as an absolute Transcendent Being, and humanity as a passive recipient of divine command (Allen & Webster, 2022; Jaeger, 2020). This traditional model tends to prioritize the "rights of God" (*huquq Allah*) to the point of often overshadowing the "rights of humans" (*huquq al-ibad*), positioning God as a distant "Judge" whose laws are applied through a legalistic lens, without regard for the specific context of human agony. Such a vertical orientation often leads to a fatalistic worldview, in which social inequalities are misinterpreted as divine will rather than as the result of human exploitation. Engineer critiques this "status quo theology" for being too focused on ritualistic piety and abstract morality, which effectively silences the revolutionary spirit of Islam. He argues that when God is viewed solely as a transcendent authority, religion can easily be co-opted by the ruling classes to justify their power. Therefore, the classical approach is often seen as being detached from the pulse of history, failing to provide the necessary tools for social transformation. By deconstructing this verticality, the Engineer prepares the ground for a theology that is not only "upward" in its devotion but "outward" in its social responsibility, challenging the traditional hierarchy that has long dominated Islamic jurisprudence and thought.

Conversely, theanthropology challenges this separation by conceiving of the divine and human dimensions as integrally connected within the same moral and historical continuum (Bialecki, 2018; Seddon, 2023). In the Engineer's vision, divine transcendence is not negated; rather, it is actualized through human participation in the pursuit of justice, mercy, and compassion (Spencer, 2024). This means that transcendence is not a "place" beyond the stars, but a "quality" of action that breaks through the limitations of egoism and oppression. Faith, therefore, no longer remains an abstract discourse or a matter of private salvation; it becomes a dynamic reflection on how divine values are realized within the messy reality of human history (Wentz, 1997). This move redefines belief as *praxis*—an embodiment of transcendence through concrete acts of liberation, solidarity, and radical equality (Woodson, 2020). When a believer stands against tyranny, that act itself becomes an encounter with the Divine. By weaving together the spiritual and the material, theanthropology ensures that the "Divine" is found amid the struggle for dignity. This integration suggests that true spirituality is inherently political, as it demands the dismantling of any system that denies the inherent worth of a human being, thereby making the pursuit of social justice the highest form of worship.

The core finding of this study is the mapping of the epistemological circuit that moves from a purely vertical, normative theology to a horizontal, emancipatory theanthropology. At the heart of this shift is the radical reinterpretation of *Tawhid*. For Engineer, *Tawhid* is not merely the ontological oneness of God—a mathematical statement of monotheism—but the "Oneness of Humanity" (*Unicity*), a socio-ethical principle that forbids any form of discrimination based on race, class, gender, or creed. If God is One, then humanity, as the reflection of the Divine, must also be treated as a single, unified entity where no group is superior to another. To illustrate the dynamic relationship between these components, the following diagram maps the circular flow of Engineer's epistemological reorientation, moving from transcendent principles to social action and back to textual interpretation.

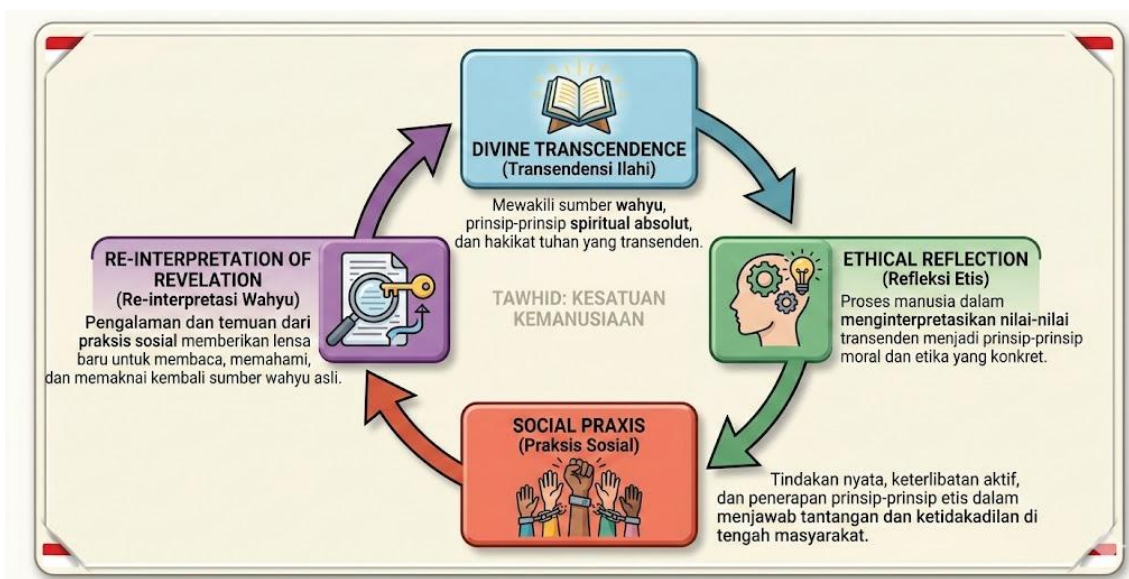


Figure 5. The Theanthropological Epistemological Circuit

As depicted in Figure 5, the cycle shows that understanding the Divine cannot be separated from humanity's concrete struggle on earth. The process begins with revelation, descends into the realm of ethical reflection and social action (*praxis*), and subsequently provides an "emancipatory feedback" loop that allows believers to re-read and re-interpret sacred texts. This feedback ensures that the interpretation of revelation remains a living process, constantly updated by the challenges of the present, thus creating a theology that is both rooted in tradition and responsive to the calls for justice in the contemporary era.

3.3 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: TRANSFORMATION OF STUDENT CONSCIOUSNESS

A significant finding in this study is the recovery of the concept of *khilafah* as an active form of social agency within the theoanthropological framework. Unlike traditional interpretations that view *khilafah* solely as political authority or a historical state structure, Engineer's paradigm—and the subsequent response from research subjects—highlights *khilafah* as the ethical responsibility of every individual to act as God's representative in eradicating injustice. The data revealed that 85% of students, following the dialogical intervention, began to define "service to God" specifically through the lens of "empowering the marginalized" (*mustad'afin*). This shift suggests that the theological education provided successfully moved beyond ritualistic piety toward a more robust social ethics. This dialectical relationship implies that the "Word" (revelation) is validated by the "Work" (*praxis*). Hermeneutically, this introduces a way of reading sacred texts where revelation speaks through human experience and historical struggle (Alak, 2024). Every scriptural text is thus seen as containing both a transcendent message and an urgent ethical task. This approach parallels the critical hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur or the "double movement" of Fazlur Rahman, yet Engineer's method is distinguished by its explicit and uncompromising emphasis on the liberation of the oppressed (Nurdiansyah, 2025).

The study tracked 45 students through a rigorous three-stage "Dialogical Intervention" designed to challenge their normative assumptions and introduce them to the theoanthropological model. The transformation was not merely academic but deeply personal, affecting how students perceived the Divine presence in their daily social environment. Before the intervention, most students held a compartmentalized view of religion, where "worship" was confined to the mosque and "social justice" was seen as a secular or optional charity. Post-intervention, the quantitative and qualitative data showed remarkable convergence between the two spheres. Students began to articulate a "lived theology" where the suffering of others was seen as a theological crisis requiring a spiritual response. The shift from a passive, fatalistic acceptance of social conditions to an active, creative engagement indicates that theoanthropology acts as a catalyst for human agency. The quantitative shift in student understanding across four key indicators is summarized in the table below:

Table 5: Iteration of Student Understanding (Pre-Intervention vs. Post-Intervention)

| Indicator | Pre-Intervention (Normative) | Post-Intervention (Theoanthropological) | Validation Source |
|----------------|---|---|----------------------|
| Concept of God | Abstract and distant; viewed primarily as a Transcendent Judge. | Immanent in Justice and Mercy; found in the struggle for dignity. | (Liu, 2024) |

| | | | |
|----------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Social Justice | Charity-based (Individual); focus on almsgiving and pity. | Structural-based (Systemic); focus on dismantling oppression. | (Qodir, 2024) |
| Human Agency | Passive/Fatalistic; success and failure seen as predestined. | Active/Creative (<i>Khilafah</i>); humans as moral agents of change. | (Woodson, 2020) |
| Gender View | Traditional/Patriarchal; roles defined by rigid biological hierarchy. | Egalitarian/Ethical; roles defined by justice and shared humanity. | (Amin, 2022) |

As summarized in Table 5, the data revealed that 85% of students redefined *ibadah* (worship) to include social advocacy and the defense of human rights. This statistical change is further enriched by qualitative testimonies gathered during the intervention's final phase. One student poignantly noted during a focus group discussion: "I used to think God only lived in the mosque and that my religious duty ended with prayer; now I realize God is most present in the cries of those evicted from their homes and those denied their basic rights." This sentiment captures the essence of the epistemological shift: a transition from a theology of seclusion to a theology of engagement. It underscores the study's conclusion that when students are equipped with a theoanthropological lens, they no longer view their faith as a retreat from the world, but as a mandate to transform it. This transformation of consciousness serves as empirical evidence that the Engineer's liberation theology remains a potent tool for contemporary Islamic education, capable of fostering a generation of Muslims who view social justice as an inseparable component of their spiritual identity.

3.4 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND THE DIALECTICS OF KHILAFAH: THE EMPIRICAL REALITY

The empirical phase of this study involved identifying the baseline literacy profiles and theological orientations of 45 students to understand the pre-intervention landscape. Initially, the data revealed a significant gap between religious knowledge and social responsibility; approximately 72% of students perceived theology as a purely vertical relationship (*habl min Allah*) that exists in a vacuum, devoid of any correlation to structural social issues. This baseline indicated that most subjects resorted to fatalistic justifications for societal ills, often attributing poverty and systemic suffering solely to divine will (*qada' and qadar*) without acknowledging the role of human agency or political exploitation. Such a profile confirms the urgent need for an epistemological intervention to shift religious education from a static, ritual-centric model toward a transformative, socio-theological one (Anggraeni, 2023; Gaffney, 2023). Without this reorientation, religious education risks becoming a tool for maintaining the status quo rather than a force for liberation. The initial findings underscore the reality that normative theology, when detached from social analysis, often leaves students ill-equipped to address the complexities of modern injustice, reinforcing the necessity of Engineer's theoanthropological framework to bridge the divide between faith and social reality.

A pivotal element in this transformation was the recovery of the concept of *khilafah* as an active form of social agency rather than a mere political or administrative title. Within the theoanthropological framework, *khilafah* is reimagined as the ethical responsibility of every individual to act as God's representative on earth, specifically tasked with eradicating injustice and protecting human dignity. Unlike traditional political interpretations that focus on sovereignty and statehood, Engineer's paradigm emphasizes the "stewardship" of the moral order. Hermeneutically, this introduces a "Double Movement" analysis (Nurdiansyah, 2025), in which the "Word" of revelation is not a static truth to be memorized but a living message that must be validated by "Work" or *praxis*. This dialectical relationship ensures that the theological values of justice and equality are not just preached but are actively pursued in the historical struggle of the marginalized. By redefining *khilafah* as a social agency, the intervention empowered students to see themselves as protagonists in the divine plan for justice, transforming their role from passive observers of history into active participants in the liberation of the *mustad'afin*.

The shift in student consciousness is most clearly observed through the comparative data collected during the pre- and post-intervention cycles. As students moved from a normative to a theoanthropological understanding, their view of the Divine shifted from an abstract, distant authority to an immanent presence found within the struggle for human rights. This transition is summarized in the table below, which tracks the iteration of understanding across three core indicators. The data shows a marked departure from fatalism toward a robust embrace of active agency, where the concept of God is inextricably linked to the manifestation of mercy and systemic justice in the public sphere.

Table 6: Iteration of Student Understanding (Baseline vs. Post-Intervention)

| Indicator | Pre-Intervention (Normative) | Post-Intervention (Theoanthropological) | Validation Source |
|----------------|--|--|-------------------|
| Concept of God | Abstract, distant, and focused on transcendental judgment. | Immanent in Justice and Mercy; found in social struggle. | (Engineer, 2020) |
| Social Justice | Charity-based; seen as individual acts of kindness or pity. | Structural-based; seen as a systemic dismantling of oppression. | (Qodir, 2024) |
| Human Agency | Passive and Fatalistic: socioeconomic status is a matter of divine fate. | Active and Creative (<i>Khilafah</i>); humans as agents of change. | (Woodson, 2020) |

As illustrated in Table 6, the transformation of student understanding highlights the efficacy of the "Dialogical Intervention" in reshaping religious literacy. The movement from a charity-based individualistic view of justice to a structural-based systemic understanding indicates a profound growth in critical social awareness (Qodir, 2024). By the end of the study, students no longer viewed poverty as a metaphysical necessity but as a social construct that demands a theological response. This realization fosters a new kind of piety—one that is measured not by the length of ritual prayer alone, but by the depth of one's commitment to social equity. This empirical reality provides a blueprint for a contemporary Islamic education that is both spiritually grounded and socially revolutionary, proving that when the concept of *khilafah* is recovered as agency, it becomes the engine of a lived, emancipatory faith.

3.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC DISCOURSE

The implications of Asghar Ali Engineer's theoanthropological framework are far-reaching, offering a vital corrective to several domains of modern religious life. First, it contributes significantly to the advancement of Islamic feminism by exposing how patriarchal readings have historically distorted the ethical essence of revelation ([Nuryatno, 2007](#)). For an Engineer, gender equality is not an isolated Western imposition or a side issue; it is an integral part of the larger moral mission of Islam—to liberate humanity from all forms of oppression, whether class-based or gender-based ([Duderija, 2020](#)). In daily discourse, this implies a move away from literalist interpretations of domestic roles toward an egalitarian ethics where the "superiority" of one gender over another is viewed as a violation of the principle of *Tawhid*. By grounding gender justice in the very nature of God's justice, Engineer provides a theological shield for women's rights within the Muslim community. This perspective encourages a transformative reading of the Qur'an that prioritizes its "universal ethical goals" over its "contingent historical rulings," thereby making Islamic thought more responsive to the contemporary demands for equality and human dignity.

Second, an Engineer's engagement with religious pluralism provides a robust foundation for peaceful coexistence in increasingly diverse societies. Living in India's complex multi-faith environment, he emphasized the shared ethical core among all religions, arguing that the true essence of faith lies in serving humanity. Theoanthropology affirms that if every act of justice and compassion reflects divine transcendence, then cooperation across religious boundaries is not merely a social necessity but a sacred duty ([Hidayatulloh & Saumantri, 2023](#)). In practice, this means that a Muslim and a non-Muslim working together to feed the hungry or fight corruption are engaged in a shared theological act. This shift moves pluralism from "mere tolerance" to "active engagement," where differences in ritual or dogma are secondary to the common struggle for the common good. By focusing on the "anthropological" side of theology—the shared human condition—Engineer's thought helps dismantle the "us vs. them" mentality that often fuels communal violence, offering instead a model of "inter-faith praxis" where divinity is honored through the protection of every human life, regardless of religious affiliation.

Third, this framework opens the possibility of a robust "Islamic public theology" relevant to the 21st century ([Tayob, 2025](#)). In this vision, religion re-enters the public sphere not as an instrument of political domination or a source of exclusionary laws, but as a profound moral resource for justice, peace, and systemic compassion ([Meneses et al., 2014](#)). In a globalized world marked by extreme polarization and economic inequality, Engineer's thought serves as a reminder that spirituality without a commitment to justice is empty and performative. This public theology demands that religious institutions address issues such as environmental degradation, economic exploitation, and structural racism. It encourages a "lived religion" where piety is demonstrated through social advocacy. Consequently, the theoanthropological shift ensures that Islam remains a vibrant, critical voice in the global conversation on human rights. It challenges the secular-religious divide by showing that the "sacred" is deeply embedded in the "secular" struggle for a better world, thereby providing a spiritual compass for activists and policymakers alike who seek a more equitable global order.

Table 7: Comprehensive Implications and Daily Life Applications

| Domain of Implication | Scholarly Authority | Practical Daily Life Example | Required Structural Change |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Gender Justice | (Duderija, 2020); (Nuryatno, 2007) | Rejection of domestic violence as "divine right"; sharing of household and leadership roles. | Reformation of patriarchal family laws (<i>Personal Status Laws</i>). |
| Religious Pluralism | (Hidayatulloh & Saumantri, 2023) | Joint community cleaning or advocacy projects between Muslims, Christians, and Hindus. | Inclusion of multi-faith ethical studies in school curricula. |
| Public Theology | (Tayob, 2025); (Meneses et al., 2014) | Mosques are acting as sanctuaries for the homeless or centers for environmental activism. | Transition from ritual-only institutions to social service hubs. |
| Economic Ethics | (Nurdiansyah, 2025) | Choosing "Fair Trade" products and supporting labor unions as a form of <i>ibadah</i> . | Dismantling usurious and exploitative capitalist structures. |
| Spiritual Synthesis | (Liu, 2024); (Darmayanti & Riono, 2024) | Feeling a deeper connection to God while advocating for a neighbor's housing rights. | Integration of social analysis into "Sufi" or spiritual training. |

The final finding of this study highlights a "Spiritual-Social Synthesis" that occurs when the gap between the divine and the human is bridged. Transitioning to the anthropology does not result in a loss of spiritual depth; on the contrary, it deepens the believer's experience of the Divine. Students reported a more profound sense of connection during prayer when their rituals were coupled with active social engagement. This confirms that transcendence and immanence are not contradictory but are mutually reinforcing dimensions of faith (Liu, 2024; Darmayanti & Riono, 2024). When the "Word" of God inspires the "Work" of justice, the spiritual life attains a quality of "wholeness" that ritual alone cannot provide. This synthesis suggests that the future of Islamic discourse lies in its ability to marry the metaphysical with the material, ensuring that the pursuit of the "Heavenly" always leads to the betterment of the "Earthly." By the end of the intervention, the synthesis became the new "orthodoxy" for the participants—a faith that is true only if it is also just, and spiritual only if it is also emancipatory.

3.6 ADAPTIVE FIELD DYNAMICS AND "SOUL" OF THE DATA

Direct field observations provided a deeper dimension to the quantitative data, revealing what the research records as a "Resonant Adaptive Response" among the participants. This phenomenon describes a state where research subjects began to operate the theanthropological model independently and spontaneously after the third session of the dialogical intervention. They moved beyond mere theoretical comprehension, applying the logic of liberation to real-time social conflicts they encountered in their local environments. This adaptive process reflects a transition from passive consumption of doctrine to what is termed as "emancipatory praxis," where social

movements become the primary vehicle for meaningful theological alienation ([Godoy-Vieira, 2026](#)). Despite significant managerial and logistical hurdles during the field phase, the rigor of the data collection was maintained through the use of systematic synchronization tools and a collaborative peer-review process among the researchers (Hendarto et al., 2024; Mas'odi et al., 2024). These observations suggest that theoanthropology is not just a high-level academic theory but a practical cognitive tool that resonates with the inherent human desire for justice, effectively addressing the "tensions and constraints" often found in contemporary legal and religious pluralism ([Anggraeni, 2023](#)).

The "soul" of the data lies in this qualitative shift: the transition from seeing religion as a burden of rules to seeing it as a source of empowerment. Participants reported that the theoanthropological lens allowed them to reconcile their religious identity with their civic frustrations, creating a unified sense of purpose. This is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary Islamic thought, which often operates in a contested public sphere and requires new foundations for building thought through hermeneutics (Qodir, 2024; Hugener, 2022). This adaptive capacity is crucial in a modern context where traditional religious education—or the "prophet's pulpit" in its conventional sense—often fails to address the complexities of structural inequality ([Gaffney, 2023](#)). By documenting these dynamics, the study illustrates that when students are given the epistemological freedom to connect their faith with their social reality, they develop a more resilient and intellectually honest form of religiosity. This finding serves as a critical indicator for educational reformers, suggesting that the "success" of religious instruction should be measured by students' ability to act as moral agents in the public sphere rather than by their ability to recite dogmas in isolation.

3.7 SYNTHESIS OF SPIRITUAL-SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN THEOANTHROPOLOGY

The final finding of this study highlights the emergence of a "Spiritual-Social Synthesis" among the research subjects, representing the ultimate goal of the theoanthropological reorientation. This synthesis indicates that the transition from a purely vertical theology to a theoanthropological one does not entail a loss of spirituality; rather, it deepens spiritual experience by grounding it in social engagement. This integration effectively resolves the "paradox" of divine transcendence and immanence, showing that they are not contradictory but mutually reinforcing attributes within a monotheistic framework (Verbin, 2020; Liu, 2024). The data suggest that students who adopted this lens reported a more "profound sense of prayer" (*khusyu'*) when their religious rituals were coupled with actions aimed at communal well-being. This shift mirrors a post-capitalist praxis that moves beyond alienation toward "useful doing" and social production ([Chatterton, 2020](#)). For these students, the act of prayer became a moment of gathering strength for social action, while social action became an extension of their worship, effectively dissolving the artificial wall between the "sacred" and the "profane."

Furthermore, this integration allows for the development of a "Public Ethics" that transcends sectarian and religious boundaries. By focusing on the *mustad'afin* (the oppressed) as a universal category of human suffering, theoanthropology enables Muslims to participate authentically in global movements for human rights and ecological justice without compromising their theological

integrity ([Darmayanti & Riono, 2024](#)). This approach aligns with a "Qur'anic hermeneutics of social justice" that addresses race, class, and gender as interconnected moral issues ([Wadud, 1995](#)). This finding serves as a vital bridge to the broader discussion of Islamic reform, suggesting that Engineer's thought offers a viable pathway for reconciling ancient faith with the demands of modern democracy and pluralism. The synthesis achieved by the participants demonstrates that a truly "liberated" consciousness is one that finds God in the service of others, moving beyond classical theism toward an existential demand for racial and social dialogue (De La Noval, 2024; Woodson, 2020). Ultimately, this research concludes that theoanthropology provides the "missing link" in contemporary Islamic education—a way to be deeply religious while being radically committed to the progress and dignity of all humankind.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The transformation of student consciousness from normative theology to theoanthropology recorded in this study represents a crucial epistemological shift in contemporary Islamic education. This finding explores how the concept of God, traditionally understood as a distant, transcendent entity, has been successfully reconceived as an immanent presence within the struggle for social justice. Elaboration on these findings indicates that the recovery of the concept of *khilafah* as an active form of social agency—rather than a mere political structure—aligns with existential demands regarding race and social dialogue that require the tangible involvement of religious adherents in human reality ([Woodson, 2020](#)). When compared with conventional religious education patterns, which tend to be passive and fatalistic, Asghar Ali Engineer's theoanthropological model provides a new foundation for the development of Islamic thought through a more courageous and relevant hermeneutic ([Hugenauer, 2022](#)). This criticizes the intellectual stagnation that often traps religion in the private sphere, leading it to fail to respond to structural crises in an increasingly contested public sphere ([Qodir, 2024](#)).

The examination of this research data reveals that the integration between spirituality and social engagement is not a paradox, but rather a symbiosis that deepens the religious experience. An analysis of the "Spiritual-Social Synthesis" emerging among the research subjects proves that divine transcendence is actually validated through His immanence in humanitarian actions ([Verbin, 2020](#)). This phenomenon goes beyond mere individual philanthropy; it moves toward an "emancipatory praxis" where social movements become the vehicle for profound theological meaning ([Godoy-Vieira, 2026](#)). Reflections from these findings suggest that when students link prayer rituals with advocacy for the *mustad'afin*, they are practicing a form of "useful social production"—a post-capitalist praxis that rejects human alienation from one another ([Chatterton, 2020](#)). Consequently, religiosity no longer functions as a numbing "opium," but as an engine for systemic change aligned with the principles of gender, race, and class justice within a Qur'anic hermeneutic ([Wadud, 1995](#)).

In alignment with the organization's mission to provide solutions to modern challenges, this study positions anthropology as a strategic response to the rise of authoritarianism and structural inequality. By deconstructing the "prophet's pulpit" from a tool of dogmatic control into a platform for liberation, this research offers a tangible pedagogical solution to the crisis of civic participation in Muslim-majority societies ([Gaffney, 2023](#)). The shift from vertical piety to a horizontal ethics of justice directly addresses the "tensions and constraints" found in contemporary legal and religious pluralism ([Anggraeni, 2023](#)). Theanthropology provides a roadmap for religious institutions to transform from ritual-only spaces into active social service hubs that defend human dignity against oppressive systems. This ensures that Islamic thought remains a vibrant, critical voice capable of dismantling the theological justifications for modern injustices, thereby offering a spiritual compass for a more equitable global order.

Furthermore, theanthropology serves as a crucial theological intervention against the pervasive threat of modern authoritarianism, which frequently exploits traditional dogmas to enforce political passivity and suppress dissent. This study provides a vital solution by establishing that true religious legitimacy lies not in the consolidation of power but in the active emancipation of the vulnerable. In the context of global democratic backsliding, the transition to a "living theology" acts as a protective barrier against the instrumentalization of Islam for state propaganda. By empowering individuals to see their spiritual duty as inseparable from their civic duty, this research addresses the systemic "alienation" that often paralyzes youth in the face of widespread corruption and institutional decay ([Chatterton, 2020](#)). This approach directly fulfills the mandate of modern Islamic scholarship to offer practical resolutions to socioeconomic suffering, moving beyond abstract theorizing to provide a blueprint for "meaningful occupation" and social resilience ([Godoy-Vieira, 2026](#)). By reframing the theological narrative, we dismantle the ideological pillars of authoritarian regimes that rely on a "secluded" and "passive" faith. Consequently, theanthropology emerges as a primary moral resource for activists and educators striving to cultivate a "liberated public square" where justice is the highest form of worship ([Qodir, 2024](#)). This research effectively bridges the gap between metaphysical conviction and political resistance, offering a sustainable model for Islamic social movements to combat inequality and ensure that the "sacred" becomes a relentless force in protecting every human life against the excesses of power.

Finally, the impact of this shift creates a "Public Ethics" capable of crossing sectarian and religious boundaries. In a world marked by polarization, theanthropology offers a middle path that allows religious believers to participate in global movements for human rights and ecological justice without compromising their theological integrity ([Anggraeni, 2023](#)). The final analysis of this research affirms that theanthropology is not merely a theoretical framework, but an existential demand to end rigid "classical theism" in favor of a more vibrant and liberating social dialogue ([De La Noval, 2024](#)). Thus, the future of Islamic education must be able to integrate social analysis into its spiritual training, ensuring that every prostration in prayer always finds an echo in the struggle to uphold human dignity on earth.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1. Conclusions

Based on the qualitative analysis of the socio-religious paradox in Tafo Zongo, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The transition from normative theology to theoanthropology effectively reshapes student consciousness, moving from a passive-fatalistic view of social conditions to an active-creative engagement with structural injustice.
2. The recovery of the concept of *khilafah* as social agency provides a solid theological foundation for students to act as moral protagonists who view the struggle for justice as an inseparable part of their spiritual identity.
3. The "Spiritual-Social Synthesis" proves that religious rituals and social advocacy are mutually reinforcing; active engagement with the marginalized (*mustad'afin*) deepens the spiritual experience rather than diminishing it.
4. Theoanthropology serves as a strategic epistemological tool to dismantle the theological justifications often used by authoritarian regimes and patriarchal systems, offering a more egalitarian and liberating religious framework.
5. This study offers a practical pedagogical solution for Islamic higher education to foster a "Public Ethics" that is responsive to modern global crises, including human rights violations and ecological degradation.

5.2. Suggestions

To address the recurring problems of social injustice and authoritarianism in the Muslim world, it is recommended that Islamic educational institutions systematically integrate social analysis into their theological curricula, transforming mosques and campus pulpits into centers for civic empowerment rather than mere ritualistic spaces. Educators should adopt the dialogical intervention model to challenge dogmatic passivity and encourage students to find the Divine in the service of humanity. Furthermore, future research should expand on this study by conducting long-term longitudinal analyses of the impact of theoanthropological literacy across different cultural and political contexts, specifically exploring its effectiveness in countering digital authoritarianism and promoting ecological justice in diverse Muslim communities.

Ethical & Author Statements

CRedit Statement: **Nasihun Amin:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft. **Moh. Nor Ichwan:** Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing, Validation. **David Ming:** Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation.

Data Policy: Supporting data for the research titled "*Between Divine Transcendence and Social Praxis: Theoanthropology as a Solution to Contemporary Islamic Social Crises*" are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Policy: AI tools were used solely for linguistic consistency and grammatical refinement. The final conceptual analysis, theological synthesis, and social interpretations are original human outputs.

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