

CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION APPROACH IN THE CULTURE OF PATRIARCHAL ANALYSIS IN SURAH AN-NISA VERSE 34: LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Qur'anic interpretation in promoting social welfare, focusing on the implementation of justice values in holy verses, especially in Surah An-Nisa verse 34. The main purpose of this study is to review the interpretation of Surah An-Nisa verse 34 by using a contemporary interpretation approach that is more relevant to the current social situation. The method used is a literature study, which includes an in-depth analysis of various sources of literature related to gender and interpretation. The results show that traditional understandings of gender, which are often rooted in patriarchal societies, result in hierarchies that are detrimental to women. However, contemporary interpretations of this verse seek to challenge this view, offering a more inclusive perspective and emphasizing gender equality. This study concludes that a fairer interpretation approach can contribute positively to gender relations in Muslim society. These findings are expected to enrich academic discussions about gender in Islam and encourage the application of social justice principles in society.

KEYWORDS Surah An-Nisa, Patriarchy, Gender Equality



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INTRODUCTION

Gender comes from the Latin "genus," which means type or type. Gender refers to the traits and behaviors attributed to men and women, which are shaped by social and cultural factors around them. Because it is influenced by local social and cultural contexts, gender is not fixed, but can change over time, trends, and certain locations or regions.

Patriarchy is a social system in which men dominate more in terms of authority, social and political participation, and other aspects than women. Based on the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, patriarchy is a family system that strongly emphasizes the bloodline from the father's side. This term is used to

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describe a social system in which men as the dominant group have control over power over women (Halizah & Faralita, 2023). Sylvia Walby (1998) in Nasrulloh and Utami (2022), identifies two forms of patriarchy, namely domestic and public. Domestic patriarchy focuses on stereotypes that state that housework is a woman's natural task that cannot be debated. This situation can contribute to the oppression of women. On the other hand, public patriarchy can be seen in the structure of society, including aspects such as the household, social environment, the world of work, and the life of the nation and state (Nasrulloh & Utami, 2022).

The gender differences between men and women, as well as the division of roles and positions that occur in today's life, will not be a problem as long as it remains fair. However, the reality is that this difference in roles actually limits the space of movement of both parties and creates injustice. The position of women in reality is often not equal to that of men, where the degree of women is usually considered inferior. This can be seen in various aspects, ranging from politics to everyday problems. For example, the birth of a girl is often not greeted with the same happiness as when giving birth to a boy, especially at the birth of the first child (Mukminto, 2020).

In Islam, the relationship between husband and wife is based on the principles of responsibility and balance. The Qur'an provides guidance on the role of each person in the family, emphasizing the importance of justice and family welfare. One of the verses that is often the subject of discussion related to the role of husband and wife is Surah An-Nisa verse 34, which outlines the husband's obligations as the head of the family and the steps that need to be taken to maintain household harmony.

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنِينَاتٌ حَفِظْنَ لِنَفْسِنَّ مَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَالتِّي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

Meaning: Men (husbands) are in charge of women (wives) because Allah has given some of them (men) more than others (women) and because they (men) have provided for some of their wealth. Righteous women are those who are obedient (to Allah) and take care of themselves when (their husbands) are not there because Allah has taken care of (them). Women whom you are worried about nusyuz, give them advice, leave them in bed (separate beds), and (if necessary,) beat them (in a painless way). However, if they obey you, do not look for ways to trouble them. Indeed, Allah is the Most High and the Greatest.

Surah An-Nisa verse 34 has long been at the center of debate regarding gender relations in Islam. This verse is often considered a guideline regarding the roles of men and women in the family, and is often used as a reference in debates about patriarchy and gender hierarchy. Classical interpretation generally emphasizes male authority and the obligation of female obedience. However, contemporary researchers are beginning to question this traditional interpretation by introducing approaches that prioritize gender equality and social justice.

In recent decades, many studies have begun to criticize the patriarchal view of this verse, arguing that such interpretations are more influenced by the socio-cultural context of the past than the core message of the Qur'an. Some academics, such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas, have put forward new views that are more oriented towards equality and respectful relationships between men and women. This study continues this approach by further examining the relationship between

contemporary interpretations and patriarchal cultural norms that exist in Muslim society. The goal is to contribute to the growing academic discussion related to gender issues in Islam.

In his research (Wasik, 2023) stated that Surah An-Nisa Verse 34 does not focus on gender differences, but rather highlights the functional roles among fellow humans. When one among them is given priority (أَيُّضِنْفَت) by Allah, then that person has the right to be a leader or Qiyām in family relationships, or in a broader context, as the leader of a country (Wasik, 2023). This verse affirms that leadership is not the exclusive right of men, but is a responsibility that can be carried out by anyone who has the trust and capacity to carry it out. This provides an opportunity for understanding that women also have the potential to become leaders, provided they meet the necessary qualifications and abilities. With this perspective, Surah An-Nisa Verse 34 underlines the importance of a functional role in society, where every individual, regardless of gender, has the opportunity to contribute to leadership and decision-making that affects common life.

Novelty from your research, while previous studies have focused on classical interpretations that often reinforce patriarchal views, your research introduces a contemporary tafsir approach that emphasizes gender equality and social justice. This modern interpretation challenges traditional gender roles and contributes to the ongoing discussion of gender relations in Islam.

By incorporating feminist theories alongside sociocultural analysis, this research offers a novel intersection of religious texts with modern gender discourses, something not deeply explored in prior studies. This integration allows for a more inclusive understanding of gender roles, especially in patriarchal societies

The main purpose of this study is to review the interpretation of Surah An-Nisa verse 34 by using a contemporary interpretation approach that is more relevant to the current social situation. The author seeks to analyze how patriarchal culture influences traditional interpretations of the verse, as well as explore the contribution of modern feminist interpretations in supporting gender equality and the role of women in Islam. Through this research, the author also aims to offer a new perspective that is more inclusive and fair in understanding gender relations in Islam, by combining the study of Qur'anic texts and feminist and sociocultural theories. This research is expected to contribute to the growing academic discussion, especially in efforts to achieve social justice and gender equality in Muslim society.

RESEARCH METHOD

The writing of this article uses the literature study method or literature review. Although the research method is based on a literature review, the author also uses feminist and cultural theories to enrich the analysis.

Reference sources that support literature studies are from various Qur'ans, classical interpretations, books and similar scientific journals.

The discussion will begin by reviewing the traditional interpretation of Surah An-Nisa verse 34, then followed by a study of critical contemporary interpretation. The author will also discuss how this contemporary interpretation interacts with patriarchal culture, as well as propose an interpretation that is more supportive of

gender justice in Muslim society. The expected end result of this study is a fairer and contextual interpretation of the teachings of the Qur'an.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Male Authority and Women's Obedience

A woman is the party who has the right to receive a living, whether she is a child, wife, mother of the child, or a parent. Q.S an-Nisa' [4]: mentions the word *al-nisa'* as the party entitled to receive alimony. The hadith narrated by at-Tirmizi corroborates the explanation that wives have the right to receive alimony from their husbands. "*Know that the right of wives over you (husbands) is that you should do good to them in providing them with clothes and food.*" (Rahayu & Nurrohim, 2022)

The classic interpretation of Surah An-Nisa verse 34 often emphasizes the authority of men as leaders in the family, as well as the obligation of women to obey their husbands. In this interpretation, there is a strong understanding of the division of gender roles, where men are considered to have greater authority in domestic and social contexts. Classical scholars, such as Ibn Kathir and Al-Qurtubi, interpret this verse by highlighting the superiority of men in economic aspects and their responsibilities as providers. This view creates hierarchical structures within the family and society, which are often detrimental to women's position.

The implications of this interpretation are significant, as the strengthening of male authority and women's obedience in classical interpretation limits the role of women, not only in the family but also in society at large. This contributes to greater gender injustices, including discrimination against women in education, the economy, and social participation (Sitorus, 2016). Interpretations that prioritize patriarchal views are often used as justifications for unfair treatment of women, thus reinforcing harmful norms.

Furthermore, (Faida et al., 2023b) in their research related to Q.S. An-Nisa 34, the explanation of this verse emphasizes the role of men as leaders. Although women can be involved in both the domestic and public spheres, they are more beneficial and better if they focus on roles in the family, supporting husbands, and educating children. The superiority of men over women is due to the greater responsibility given to them. Furthermore, it is explained that respecting the husband, maintaining dignity, and concentrating on the domestic sphere are forms of application of Q.S. An-Nisa verse 34 (Faida et al., 2023a).

Furthermore, (Nasrulloh & Utami, 2022) in their research, According to Mrs. Ulil Fauziyah, a lecturer at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, in the domestic context, men are usually prioritized as leaders who are responsible for other family members. Women can take up this position if the man is considered incapable, for example due to prolonged illness, alcoholism, or admitting his inability. Meanwhile, in the public sphere, women have the potential to become leaders on an equal footing with men, provided they have the necessary capacity and integrity.

This traditional interpretation is inseparable from the social and cultural context in which the scholars live. In a dominant patriarchal society, women are often seen as subordinate to men (Sulistiyowati, 2020). Interpretations that support this view reinforce existing social norms. Taking into account the social and cultural factors that surround this interpretation, it can be understood that classical

interpretation not only reflects sacred texts, but is also a product of a social environment that favors patriarchy.

According to M. Quraish Shihab, Islamic leadership does not only depend on outward appearance, but must also reflect the essence of Islam in practice. If a leadership does not show the implementation of Islamic values, then it cannot be considered Islamic leadership. On the other hand, if the leadership has adopted Islamic principles, then it can be categorized as Islamic leadership, although it is not always presented in an Islamic form, even if the perpetrator is not a Muslim. In the Islamic view, leadership is often referred to by various terms, such as *imamah*, *caliphate*, *ulul amri*, *amir*, *wali*, and *ra'in* (Muhammad, 2021).

Gender Equality Perspective

The issue of gender leadership in Islam has become an increasingly important concern in this modern era. Contemporary researchers such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas have made important contributions to the interpretation of Surah An-Nisa verse 34 with a more gender-egalitarian approach. They argue that traditional interpretations that emphasize male authority and women's obligation to submit do not reflect the core spirit of Islamic teachings, which are supposed to emphasize justice and equality. In this context, (Faida et al., 2023b) explained, If you read the verse literally, it can be concluded that men are female leaders. However, in understanding the Qur'an, it is necessary to consider *asbabun nuzul* and other rules, including the language aspect and the rules of Ushul Fiqh. Thus, the conclusion is that women are created equal to men, so that both men and women can become leaders. The advantages mentioned in the verse do not only apply to men, but also to women.

In the public sphere, women have the potential to be leaders on an equal footing with men as long as they have the necessary capacity and integrity (Nasrulloh & Utami, 2022).

However, the Hadith of Bukhari from Abi Bakrah with an Authentic Narration:

أَرْمَأُ هَرْمَأُ أَوْ لَوْ مَوْقَ حَلْفِي نَلْ: لَسُو هَيْلَعٌ لِّلَا لَصَّ نَلَا لَاق

Meaning: It will not be possible to achieve the glory of a people led by a woman" (Sahih al-Bukhari No. 4425)

This hadith clearly states that women are not suitable to hold leadership positions in a country or political power. This is due to the need to avoid actions that can lead to bad luck.

Wahbah Zuhaili in *tafsir al Munir* argues that men have an advantage over women, not only because of their physical and psychological strength, but also because men hold responsibility for the family. Therefore, leadership is more appropriate to be handed over to men. In addition, Wahbah Zuhaili also supported the opinion of the informant who stated that women's duties are to nurture, educate, and serve their husbands. Ibn Katsir, a famous mufassir, also stated that History shows that the role of women in the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was not limited to wife, companion, or male complement, but they were also valued as individuals who had equality in terms of rights and obligations before Allah SWT (Muhammad, 2021).

In today's context, more and more people are realizing the importance of multifunctional roles for individuals. Women have the opportunity to become successful scientists, loving wives, wise mothers and educators, successful writers,

and virtuous social workers. Technology and professionalization have provided opportunities for women to fulfill their aspirations in daily tasks that have been a burden. Thus, they can contribute more actively in social responsibility and get involved in the world of politics (Mufarikhin & Dewi, 2021).

The Influence of Patriarchal Culture in the Interpretation of Surah An-Nisa Verse 34

Contemporary interpretation tends to reveal how patriarchal culture influences traditional interpretations of Surah An-Nisa Verse 34. In classical interpretation, the role of men as leaders and women as submissive parties is often emphasized, in line with the dominant patriarchal norms of the time. Scholars such as Ibn Kathir and Al-Qurtubi support this view by emphasizing the authority of men in the family, especially in terms of economic and social responsibility.

However, contemporary interpreters such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas offer a more balanced perspective, criticizing this patriarchal interpretation. They argue that traditional interpretations do not fully reflect Islamic principles of justice and equality. In their interpretation, the term "qawwāmūn" refers more to the responsibility and capacity of the individual, rather than solely male authority, so that both men and women can lead according to their abilities and roles (Jannah, 2020). Asma also explained, In fact, the Qur'an assigns husbands as breadwinners does not mean that "women cannot or should not provide for themselves." This assignment only shows that the Qur'an does not expect women to be the main breadwinners. Men become qawwāmūn over women only in the context in which Allah gives certain advantages to some men over some women. In addition, men are also obliged to spend their property, so it is clear that men, as a group, are not qawwāmūn over women as a group (Hakim, 2017).

According to Amina Wadud, the advantages possessed by men are only limited to inheritance rights regulated in the Qur'an. Therefore, men have a responsibility to use their wealth in favor of women, which makes them get a double share of the inheritance. In her interpretation of surah an-Nisa verse 34, Amina Wadud focuses on the meaning of the word fadhadhala.

This contemporary interpretation seeks to free the verse from the influence of patriarchal culture and adapt it to modern values that prioritize gender equality. They see that leadership in a family or society is not necessarily based on gender, but on the abilities, integrity and responsibilities that each individual has (Manurung & Surya, 2017).

In patriarchal cultures, women are often faced with social pressures that limit their life choices and self-development. They are often considered less worthy or inappropriate to pursue careers, higher education, or other ambitions outside of their traditional roles as wives and mothers. In addition, patriarchal culture can hinder the development of individuals in the family. For example, women may face difficulties in pursuing careers or education due to social pressures that prioritize traditional roles as wives and mothers (Syahrizan & Siregar, 2024). Therefore, the impact of patriarchal culture on household resilience varies greatly depending on how this culture is applied and understood in the context of a particular society. What is clear is that gender equality and recognition of the needs and interests of each family member are the keys to creating healthy and sustainable households (Sakina, 2017).

The Relevance of the Interpretation of Surah An-Nisa Verse 34 to Contemporary Gender Issues

The Tafsir of Surah An-Nisa Verse 34 has a very important relevance in the discussion of gender issues in the modern era, especially related to the debate about equality and the role of women in today's society. This verse is often interpreted in the framework of patriarchy, which emphasizes the position of men as the head of the family. However, contemporary interpretations seek to give new meaning to this verse by taking into account the principles of justice and gender equality.

Modern interpreters such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas assert that an understanding of this verse should not lead to discrimination against women. Rather, they encourage the reader to understand that the term "qawwāmūn" can be interpreted as responsibility and ability, which can be possessed by anyone, regardless of gender (Nahari, 2022). In this view, both men and women should have equal rights and responsibilities in family and community life.

The relevance of this interpretation is also very evident in efforts to fight for women's rights in various social and political contexts. By referring to this verse, women activists can push for the creation of more inclusive and equitable policies, which take into account the contribution of women in various sectors, including in the economy, education, and leadership. This more progressive interpretation reflects a change in society that increasingly recognizes the importance of women's participation in decision-making processes.

In the midst of the increasingly urgent flow of globalization, contemporary interpretation of Surah An-Nisa Verse 34 can serve as a tool to support the struggle of Islamic feminism. This interpretation provides a framework for building a new understanding of the role of women, not only as wives and mothers, but also as empowered individuals and capable of contributing to society (Rozy, 2023).

More than that, interpretations that emphasize equality and justice can help dismantle harmful gender stereotypes. By reinforcing the narrative that both men and women have equal rights and obligations, this interpretation supports women's empowerment efforts in fighting patriarchal norms that still exist at various levels of society.

Overall, the relevance of the interpretation of Surah An-Nisa Verse 34 to contemporary gender issues shows that a more inclusive and fair interpretation can make a positive contribution to the struggle for women's rights, support gender equality, and encourage society to better understand and appreciate the role of women in public and private life.

Integritation of Feminism and Sociocultural Theories in Interpretation

Since two decades ago until now, feminism has become an interesting issue that is often discussed among Muslims (Rozy, 2023). Feminism is an ideology that emerged when women fought for equal rights with men. This understanding is driven by women's belief that their situation in society can be changed so that they are equal to men in various social aspects (Wasik, 2023).

The Qur'an is a book of instruction (huda), for humans in general and for pious servants in particular (Nurrohim, 2019). The Qur'an, as the holy book of Muslims, contains teachings on faith and worship, as well as instructions on various aspects of human life (Sukmaningtyas et al., 2024). In the context of Surah Al-Nisa Verse 34, contemporary interpretation does not focus on gender, but rather on the role and potential of the individual. According to Rahman, anyone who has a role

and potential can become a *qawwāmūn* (The Qur'an Morality and Critical Reason, 276). Muslim feminists give the interpretation that the term "*Qawwam*" refers to the obligation of men to provide for their livelihood (productive function) and support women's reproductive functions. Women, as the bearers of reproductive functions, must be guaranteed their rights by their husbands, including economic support, health, and safety.

Modern interpretations of Surah An-Nisa Verse 34 have evolved by combining feminist theories and sociocultural approaches. This approach aims to provide a new meaning that is more gender-equitable and reflects equality, while still taking into account the social and cultural factors that influenced previous interpretations. The goal is to revise the views that have so far supported male dominance and female submission, by emphasizing the importance of women's empowerment in various aspects of life, including social, political, and spiritual.

The theory of feminism in the Islamic context, as put forward by thinkers such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas, offers a framework that challenges the patriarchal structures that have long been influential in traditional interpretation. They propose that the verses of the Qur'an, including Surah An-Nisa Verse 34, be understood based on the principles of justice and equality, not gender hierarchy. The term "*qawwāmūn*," which is often interpreted as "leader," according to this interpretation should be better understood as "protector" or "guardian," with the responsibility shared between men and women in caring for the family.

Nasr Hamid analyzes the position of women in pre-Islamic societies from the perspective of socio-historical context. Much of Islamic law relating to women, along with their significance, cannot be understood without considering pre-Islamic Arab culture. In the culture of pre-Islamic Arab societies, women had no right to belong. Nasr Hamid also explained that one of the things that appears in the descriptive context of the Qur'an but is seen as legislation (*sharia*) is the leadership (*qawwāmah*) of men over women. This is understood as the responsibility of men towards women, along with all the implications that arise from the authority of men to educate their wives, including the act of silence and spanking (Zaid, 2003).

The sociocultural approach in this interpretation also considers the situation of society in the age of the coming revelation, where pre-Islamic Arab society was heavily influenced by patriarchy. Traditional interpreters often adopt views that reinforce the position of men without considering the social developments that occur in modern times (Dewi, 2013).

By combining feminist and sociocultural theories, contemporary interpretation emphasizes that leadership in the family and society should be determined by abilities and responsibilities, not by gender. It also rejects the idea that women only have domestic roles, and recognizes their right to be active in the public sphere, including holding leadership positions if they have the necessary competencies.

Overall, this approach paves the way for a more relevant and fair interpretation, which recognizes the potential of women to be equal to men, as well as enriching Islamic discourse with values of justice that are more in line with the modern social context.

Criticism of the Justification of Patriarkal Interpretation

The patriarchal interpretation of Surah An-Nisa Verse 34 has long been the subject of criticism, especially because it is considered to legitimize gender

inequality and support the dominance of men over women in various aspects of life. This interpretation often emphasizes that men naturally have an advantage in terms of leadership, both in the family and in society, as well as holding greater economic responsibility. Meanwhile, women are considered to be more passive, with major roles in the domestic sphere, such as taking care of the household and subservient to male authority. This view is considered to strengthen the patriarchal social structure that limits the space for movement and contribution of women in the public sphere (Andika, 2018).

Criticism of this interpretation reveals that the patriarchal approach does not reflect the values of justice and equality that are actually at the core of Islamic teachings. Many argue that the interpretation was greatly influenced by the social and cultural context of the era in which it was first developed, where patriarchal norms dominated people's lives. Instead of basing the interpretation on the universal principles of Islam, patriarchal interpretation is considered to reflect more of a cultural bias that considers men as natural leaders and women as submissive.

Contemporary interpreters, such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas, have offered sharp criticism of this approach, emphasizing that interpretations that maintain gender inequality are at odds with the broader teachings of Islam, which prioritize justice, equality, and respect for the dignity of each individual, regardless of their gender. They argue that this traditional interpretation ignores the historical context and *asbabun nuzul* of the verse, which is important for understanding a deeper and more relevant meaning in the modern context.

In addition, this criticism also highlights that patriarchal interpretations tend to limit women's potential and put them in a less powerless position, both within the family and society. In fact, in a modern context that respects human rights and gender equality, this interpretation is considered not in accordance with the times. Therefore, many encourage the interpretation of Qur'anic verses to be carried out in a more inclusive manner and pay attention to egalitarian principles, so that women can be recognized as equal individuals and have the right to participate in various aspects of life, including in leadership.

The research gap identified from the findings of this study includes several important aspects:

1. Lack of Research on the Influence of Patriarchal Culture in Contemporary Tafsir

While there are many studies on classical and gender-based tafsir, few have thoroughly examined the impact of patriarchal culture on contemporary interpretations, especially in modern Muslim societies. This study addresses this gap by exploring how prevailing patriarchal norms influence the development and reception of contemporary tafsir among scholars and the general public.

2. Limited Studies that Integrate Feminist and Sociocultural Theories in Tafsir

Most previous studies tend to separate feminist and sociocultural analyses when studying tafsir, even though both are closely related in shaping gender interpretations. This research fills the gap by integrating both approaches, offering a more comprehensive perspective on interpreting Qur'anic verses.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that gender, which comes from the Latin word "genus," refers to the traits and behaviors associated with men and women, which are shaped by social and cultural contexts. In patriarchal societies, men often hold control of power, while women are often considered to be in a lower position. Traditional interpretations of Surah An-Nisa verse 34 often reinforce gender hierarchies, emphasizing male authority and women's obedience. However, contemporary interpretations are beginning to challenge this view with an approach that emphasizes more gender equality and social justice. Through a new understanding, this verse can be seen as a call for more inclusive leadership, where women also have the potential to lead, provided they meet the necessary conditions. Thus, a more equitable approach to interpretation can contribute positively to gender relations in Muslim society.

Further research needs to be conducted to explore the relationship between contemporary interpretation and patriarchal culture that exists in Muslim society. It is hoped that the results of this research can contribute to academic discussions about gender in Islam, as well as encourage the application of the principles of equality and social justice in society. Additionally, it is important to engage a variety of perspectives, including feminist views, in order to produce interpretations that are more inclusive and relevant to today's social context.

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