

Revelatory Communication and Marital Authority: A Critical Re-reading of Qiwāmah in Qur'an 4:34

 Riza Anggara Putra^{1*},  Imas Bagus Putra²  Erly Syarifurizal

¹ UIN Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari Ponorogo

² UIN Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari Ponorogo

² UIN Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari Ponorogo

rizaanggara@uinponorogo.ac.id

denbaguspart2@gmail.com

Erly.syarifurizal@uinponorogo.ac.id

Abstract

This article analyses Surah al-Nisā' (4:34) as a form of revelatory communication that establishes the structure of marital authority within the Muslim family. The verse has traditionally been understood as providing theological legitimacy for the husband's leadership (qiwāmah). However, contemporary social dynamics call for a more contextual and gender-just reinterpretation. This study employs a library research approach using thematic exegesis (maudhui) and linguistic analysis of the concept of qawwāmūn. The findings indicate that the concept of leadership in this verse is not absolute or natural, but rather encompasses functional (kasbī) and potential (wahbī) dimensions. Thus, the revelatory message in Surah al-Nisā' (4:34) is more appropriately understood as an ethical-relational guideline within the family, rather than as a legitimisation of patriarchal domination. These findings will also contribute to the reconstruction of a more egalitarian marital authority within contemporary Islamic studies.

Abstrak

Artikel ini menganalisis QS. al-Nisā' (4):34 sebagai bentuk komunikasi wahyu yang membangun struktur otoritas marital dalam keluarga Muslim. Ayat tersebut secara klasik dipahami sebagai legitimasi teologis kepemimpinan suami (qiwāmah). Namun, dinamika sosial kontemporer menuntut pembacaan ulang yang lebih kontekstual dan berkeadilan gender. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi pustaka (library research) dengan metode tafsir tematik (maudhui) dan analisis linguistik terhadap konsep *qawwāmūn*. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep kepemimpinan dalam ayat tersebut tidak bersifat absolut dan kodrati, melainkan mengandung dimensi fungsional (kasbī) dan potensial (wahbī). Dengan demikian, komunikasi wahyu dalam QS. al-Nisā' (4):34 lebih tepat dipahami sebagai pedoman etis-relasional dalam keluarga, bukan sebagai legitimasi dominasi patriarkal.

Article Information:

Received ----(26 Januari 2026)

Revised ----(08 Februari 2026)

Published ----(01 Maret 2026)

Keywords:

revelatory communication,
qiwāmah, husband's
leadership, gender equality,
thematic exegesis

Temuan ini juga nantinya akan berkontribusi pada rekonstruksi otoritas marital yang lebih egaliter dalam studi Islam kontemporer

This is an open-access article under the CC BY SA license.



INTRODUCTION

QS. al-Nisā' (4):34 is one of the verses most frequently cited in discussions of gender relations and authority within Muslim families. This verse is generally understood as the theological basis for the concept of *qiwāmah*, namely male leadership over women. In the classical exegetical tradition, this concept is interpreted normatively as legitimising male superiority, whether in intellectual, physical, or religious terms. Exegetes such as al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, and al-Zamakhshari assert that male leadership is based on two main arguments: the superiority bestowed by God (*Bimā Faḍḍala Allāh Ba'Dahum 'Alā Ba'D*) and economic responsibility as providers (*Bimā Anfaqū Min Amwālihim*).

However, a number of contemporary studies suggest that this classical interpretation cannot be separated from the socio-historical context in which it was produced. The patriarchal structure of society during the classical period helped shape the interpreters' perspectives on gender relations. From this perspective, exegesis functions not only as an explanation of the text, but also as a mechanism for legitimising existing social structures. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd asserts that religious texts are always situated within a dialectic between revelation and social reality, meaning that their meaning is neither singular nor static.

With the advent of the modern era, there have been efforts to reinterpret the concept of *qiwāmah* in a more contextual manner and with a focus on gender justice. Fazlur Rahman, for example, proposed a contextual approach that emphasises the importance of understanding the Qur'an within a framework of universal moral values that transcend its historical context. This approach was subsequently further

developed by Amina Wadud through a tauhidic hermeneutics that emphasises ontological equality between men and women in the Qur'an. Wadud argues that qiwāmah cannot be understood as legitimising male domination, but rather as a social responsibility that is functional and contextual. In line with this, Asma Barlas rejects patriarchal readings of the Qur'an by asserting that the sacred text contains no theological justification for the subordination of women; rather, it is human interpretations that are often gender-biased.

Nevertheless, the majority of these modern studies still tend to operate within a normative-apologetic framework, that is, they seek to reconcile the text with modern values without thoroughly examining how the meaning of qiwāmah is produced and reproduced within power relations. In this context, the integration of critical social theory becomes essential for understanding interpretation as a discursive practice that is not neutral. Michel Foucault, for example, demonstrates that knowledge is always linked to power, so that every production of meaning, including interpretation, cannot be separated from the power relations that surround it. Using this perspective, the interpretation of qiwāmah as male authority can be seen as part of a discursive construction that normalises gender domination within Muslim society.

Furthermore, Pierre Bourdieu explains that social domination, including gender domination, operates not only through material structures but also through symbolic mechanisms that make it appear natural and unquestioned. In this context, the concept of qiwāmah can be understood as a form of symbolic capital legitimised through religious interpretation and subsequently reproduced in social practice. This approach opens up space for the deconstruction of understandings that have long been considered established, whilst demonstrating that authority within the family is not something of a natural order, but rather the result of social construction that is subject to change.

Furthermore, Kecia Ali's study on sexual ethics in Islam demonstrates that many rules concerning gender relations in Islamic law are the result of historical constructions heavily influenced by the social and political contexts of their time. Consequently, a reinterpretation of the concept of *qiwāmah* is not only possible but also an urgent necessity in the face of contemporary social changes, particularly the increasing participation of women in the public sphere and the economy.

Although these various studies have made significant contributions, there remain several research gaps that need to be addressed. Firstly, the majority of studies still focus on legal aspects or textual interpretation, without viewing QS. al-Nisā' (4):34 as a form of revelatory communication that is dialogical and contextual. Secondly, the integration of power theory into exegetical analysis remains relatively limited, meaning that the ideological dimensions of meaning production have not been fully revealed. Thirdly, many studies remain trapped in the dichotomy between classical and modern exegesis without undertaking an epistemological deconstruction of the underlying assumptions of both.

This article will discuss the leadership of the husband within the family. The author will begin by examining the views of Islamic scholars on male leadership as found in QS. al-Nisā': 34. This discussion aims to contextualise the issue of male leadership within the family, including whether such leadership can be transferred to the female partner or wife. This discussion of a husband's leadership within the family will be examined from a gender equality perspective.

The article will also discuss the views of Islamic scholars regarding the husband's leadership. It will further examine gender equality as the perspective used to interpret the husband's leadership within the family. Gender is a social construct regarding the roles of men and women, and these roles are not innate. These roles can be exchanged between men and women. Some scholars argue that the husband's leadership in the

family, as based on Surah an-Nisa': 34, is not an inevitability nor is it innate. The husband's leadership is discretionary and acquired (through effort).

METHODS

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Qawwamun in Surah an-Nisa' Verse 34

Islam attaches great importance to the presence of a leader within a community or group. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "If three or more of you are travelling, one of you should be appointed as a leader". A leader should possess the necessary qualifications for leadership so that they can guide their members towards the goals they wish to achieve. If leadership is entrusted to someone who is not qualified, then destruction is inevitable. Leadership refers to a person's ability to influence others so that they are willing to act in accordance with the leader's wishes. Leadership can function as both a social position and a social process.

Leadership as a social position is the rights and obligations held by an individual or an organisation. Meanwhile, leadership as a social process encompasses all actions taken by an individual or an organisation that result in the mobilisation of members of the community. Fundamentally, leadership makes no distinction between men and women. Both have the same requirements to be good leaders.

It is usually the husband who acts as the head of the family. The family is the smallest unit of society. A family consists of a husband, wife, and children resulting from their marriage and their descendants. The family also includes the ascending line, comprising the father, mother, grandfather and grandmother, full siblings and their children, as well as the grandfather's and grandmother's siblings, uncles and aunts, and their children (cousins). The term 'family' encompasses the husband, wife, and all close and distant relatives, who, under any circumstances, have their own respective rights and obligations. The extent of these rights varies depending on the degree of closeness or distance from the individual. The rights of close relatives are stronger than those of more distant relatives.

The role of a leader within a family is far more important than that of a leader in a company. In a family, members live together constantly and feel a sense of belonging to one another, and

any issues that arise can be resolved immediately. In a Muslim family, leadership lies with the husband. The formation of this family begins with the marriage contract between a man and a woman. Marriage is, in a sense, a ceremony of investiture in which the husband is appointed as the head of the household.

The husband's leadership over his wife in a Muslim family is based on Surah an-Nisa': 34, as follows: Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the support them from one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the Wives are obedient and guard the unseen, as Allah has guarded them. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them, and keep them in their beds and strike them; but if they obey you, seek no way against them. Verily, Allah is Exalted, Great. Meaning: *Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are those who are obedient to Allah and guard their chastity when their husbands are absent, for Allah has guarded them. As for those women from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them, and keep them apart in bed, and strike them. Then, if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Verily, Allah is Exalted and Great.*

The reason for the revelation of the above verse relates to the relationship between a husband and wife who are experiencing marital difficulties. Muqatil narrated that Surah al-Nisa: 34 was revealed due to a quarrel between Sa'ad ibn Rabi' and Habibah bint Zaid ibn Abi Zuhair. Both were husband and wife, and both belonged to the Ansar. Sa'ad ibn Rabi', as the head of the household, was subjected to disobedience by his wife, so Ibn Rabi' slapped her. Habibah (his wife) did not accept her husband's treatment, so she and her father went to see the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and reported the incident. Upon arriving before the Prophet (peace be upon him), her father said: "I have married my daughter to him, and then he slapped her." The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said: "Let Habibah retaliate by slapping her husband." Thereupon, Habibah and her father left the Prophet's presence to go and meet her husband to retaliate for his treatment of her. Before long, before the two had reached Ibn Rabi', the Prophet summoned them back and said: "Return, for Jibril has come to me." Allah revealed this verse, and the Prophet () recited it: "I intended one thing, but Allah intended another, and what Allah intends is certainly better." Thereupon, Habibah abandoned her plan to retaliate against her husband for his treatment of her.

In Surah al-Nisa': 34 above, the word *qawwamum* appears. The plural form of this word is *qawwa>m*, derived from the root word *qa>ma*. The word *qa>ma*, along with its various derivatives, appears 660 times in the Qur'an. For example, the word *aqi>mu>* al-shalah is one of the derived forms of the word *qa>ma*. Exegetes explain that the use of the word *aqi>mu>* in the command to pray indicates a requirement for perfect performance, encompassing the fulfilment of all its conditions, pillars, and Sunnah. From the same root comes the word *qâim* (isim fâ'il), meaning one who carries out a task or whatever is entrusted to them well. When this word changes form to *qawwa>m*, its meaning expands to encompass the ability to carry out duties and responsibilities perfectly and consistently. In this regard, it can be understood that the designation as *qawwa>m* is not absolute in terms of gender (male), but rather leans towards the ability to fulfil responsibilities perfectly and consistently.

The word '*qawwa>mu>m*' is the hyperbolic form of the word '*qa>im*', which implies a large number (*li al-taksi>r*). Meanwhile, the word '*qa>im*' derives from the root '*qa>ma-yaqu>mu-qiya>man*', meaning 'to stand'. When viewed from the function of the word '*qawwa>m*' (the *muba>lagah* form), the statement '*al-rija>l qawwa>mu>na*' implies that the majority of men are more suited to be leaders than women, but certainly not all men. Al-Asfahani links the word to a person, so that it has two meanings: subjugation (*taskhir*) and choice (*ikhtiyar*). Meanwhile, the word '*qawwam*' in that verse carries the meaning of choice (*ikhtiyar*). This interpretation implies that male leadership over women in the domestic sphere is not a given, but must be strived for. Ibn Manzur defines the word '*qawwa>m*' in that verse as *al muh}a>fazah* (to protect) and *al-is}la>h* (to improve).

The discussion regarding the meaning and definition of the word '*qawwam*' above can be summarised into at least three points. Firstly, from a linguistic perspective, the function of the prefix '*muba>lagah*' in the word '*qawwam*' indicates the meaning of 'many', but not all men. It seems difficult to deny that men are generally more suitable and fit to lead women in the domestic sphere than women are to lead men; secondly, the word '*qawwa>m*' implies a sense of choice, so that male leadership within the household must be actively pursued in order to be worthy of leading one's wife and is not a given or automatic; Thirdly, men are, by nature, more entitled to be leaders over women in the domestic sphere.

Classical and modern exegetes, employing the approaches of *tafsir bi al-riwayah* and *bi al-ra'yi*, interpret the word '*qawwam*' to mean leadership (*umara'*). This interpretation stems from the exegesis of Ibn Abbas. The verse states that there are two factors that cause leadership to be

held by men, namely: first, the superiority granted by Allah to men over women; and second, because men/husbands bear the financial responsibility for women/wives. The exegetes agree that men/husbands are the leaders of women/wives. The question then arises as to whether leadership within the family applies to all husbands or not? Or, does a husband automatically become the leader of his wife within the family simply because he possesses these advantages and is able to provide for her? Naturally, there are differences of opinion amongst the exegetes on this matter.

Al-Zamakhshari held the view that men, as a whole, are the leaders of women. This is due to the advantages bestowed by Allah upon men over women. On this basis, he argued, male leadership derives from this divine honour and not from competition, domination or coercion. As for the honour of men, it consists of intellectual strength, strong will and physical strength, the ability to write, ride horses and shoot arrows. For this reason, men are chosen to be prophets, scholars, public leaders (*al-imama>h al kubra>*) and domestic leaders (*al-imama>h al-sugra>*), jihad, the call to prayer, the sermon, seclusion in the mosque, acting as a witness in cases of *hudud* and *qishash*, receiving a larger share of the inheritance and being entitled to *'asabah*, acting as a guardian in marriage, having the right to divorce and reconciliation, polygamy, the establishment of lineage, and other matters.

Essentially, al-Zamakhshari's interpretation can be summarised as follows: firstly, male leadership over women is a given or automatic consequence of their superiority. Secondly, this leadership encompasses all forms of leadership, both domestic and public, relating to religious matters and worldly affairs.

Al-Alusi and al-Biqā'i offer differing interpretations of Surah An-Nisa': 34. According to both, the leadership held by men takes two forms: wahbiyy (given) and kasbiyy .¹² Leadership in the form of wahbiyy constitutes an advantage that Allah has bestowed upon men over women, and this is of a given nature. All men, regardless of their education or level of intelligence, simply by virtue of being male, automatically possess this advantage bestowed by Allah. It is because of this advantage that men are deemed suitable and worthy to be leaders of women. This view is held by the majority of exegetes.

As for leadership in the form of kasbiyy, according to al-Alusi and al-Biqā'i, this is because the husband provides for his wife. This kind of leadership must be earned by the man or result from the husband's efforts, unlike wahbiyy leadership, which is obtained without any effort. In

reality, not all husbands have the ability to provide for their wives, unless they are willing to work hard and earnestly seek the sustenance that Allah has provided on earth. It is only through the blessings bestowed by Allah and the ability to provide for his wife that a husband is entitled to be the leader of his wife. A husband has no right to be a leader for his wife without the support of providing for her. Islamic jurisprudence states that if a husband cannot provide for his wife, she has the right to seek a divorce (*fasakh*). This is the view of Imam Malik and Imam Shafi'i, whereas according to Imam Abu Hanifah, the wife does not have the right to seek a divorce. From a *fiqh* perspective, it can be concluded that regarding male leadership within the domestic sphere and the household, a man may act as a leader if he fulfils the requirement, namely providing for his wife (of a *kasbiyy* nature).

Furthermore, al-Alusi states that Surah an-Nisa': 34 does not explicitly state that Allah has favoured men over women. The verse reads: '*bi mā fadhhdhala Allah ba'dahum 'ala ba'dh*' (by what Allah has favoured some of them, men, over others) and does not state: '*bi mā fadhhdhala Allah 'alaihinna*' (by what Allah has favoured men over women). In his view, this statement is due to the fact that there are some women who possess superiority and nobility over men. Thus, it can be said that men's superiority over women is more of a '*taghli>ban*' or a matter of the majority. This means that, whilst the majority of men are indeed more noble and can therefore lead women, not all men possess such nobility, just as there are some women who are more noble than men.

The advantages that Allah has bestowed upon men over women are intellectual strength, physical strength and religious devotion. By virtue of these qualities, men are chosen to be prophets, heads of households, great leaders and guardians in marriage. As for the honour that a husband must earn through his own efforts, this takes the form of providing a dowry, clothing and other necessities for his wife from his own wealth.

Based on the interpretations of al-Alusi and al-Biq'a'i above, it can be concluded that male leadership takes two forms: *wahbiyy* and *kasbiyy*. *Wahbiyy* refers to the *innate* potential for leadership bestowed by Allah upon men, whether in the form of physical strength, intellect or religious devotion. This *wahbiyy* leadership potential must be supported by *kasbiyy* leadership, or leadership based on effort that is, leadership potential that must be actively cultivated. The *wahbiyy* leadership potential is an interpretation of the phrase '*bi mā fadhhdhala Allah*', whilst *kasbiyy* leadership is an interpretation of the verse '*bi mā anfaqû min amwâlihîm*'. It is on the basis of these two forms of leadership *wahbiyy* and *kasbiyy* that men can become leaders over

women. Nevertheless, neither of these views denies the superiority that men possess over women, which makes them worthy of being leaders.

Imam Bukhari narrated a hadith concerning leadership for everyone, men and women alike, and that everyone will be held to account. This leadership applies to everyone in both the domestic and public spheres. The word ‘amîr’ denotes the highest public leadership within the government. Meanwhile, domestic leadership is referred to by the term ‘al-rajul’, meaning the husband as the leader of all household members. As for women, or ‘al-mar’ah’, they function as leaders who manage the household and the children.

According to Ibn Hajar, the duty of the head of state or ‘amîr’ is to uphold the religion by enforcing regulations and justice within the law. The husband’s leadership within his family involves managing family affairs and providing for their rights. Meanwhile, the wife’s leadership entails managing household affairs, caring for the children, serving her husband, and offering him advice.¹⁵ From the wording and explanation of Ibn Hajar, the hadith does not address the division of leadership, whether for men or women, at the public level; rather, it explains leadership at the domestic household level, where the husband manages all household members whilst the wife is responsible for managing the home and educating the children. It is also explained that the wife has the right to offer advice to her husband regarding household matters.

Marital Authority: Between Wahbiyy and Kasbiyy

The word ‘gender’ comes from English and means ‘sex’. Discussions of gender are often linked to the roles, behaviours, mindsets and characteristics of men and women, which are constantly evolving within society. Mansur Faqih defines gender as the characteristics of men or women that are shaped by social and cultural factors. Masculine and feminine characteristics are constructed by the socio-cultural environment in which a person lives and resides. A person’s gender identity may change depending on how and where they are brought up.

Nasarudin Umar explains gender using operational terminology. According to him, gender is a cultural concept that serves to identify differences in roles, behaviour, etc., between men and women, which have developed as a result of social construction. The determination of gender is based solely on biological sex. Gender is a distinction based on biological sex; it is not biological in nature, let alone a natural given. In other words, gender refers to the differences

in behaviour between men and women arising from biological anatomical differences, and these behavioural differences are socially constructed. In the social sciences, gender is defined as the pattern of relationships between men and women based on their respective social characteristics.

Several scholars have defined the issue of gender using different terms, including Hilary M. Lips, H.T. Wilson and Linda L. Lindsey; however, broadly speaking, their definitions are essentially the same as those mentioned by the author above. Meanwhile, Elaine Showalter emphasises that gender is more than simply a distinction between men and women as viewed through socio-cultural constructs. All these explanations of gender can be summarised as follows: gender is a set of attitudes, roles, responsibilities, functions, rights and behaviours inherent in men and women as a result of the cultural or social environment in which they grow up and are raised. This means that differences in character, attitudes and behaviour considered typical of women or men—or, more commonly, referred to as femininity and masculinity—are primarily the result of an individual's learning through a lengthy process of socialisation within the community in which they grow up and are brought up. Gender equality is a term that is frequently heard and used in discussions, or found in a number of references. What does gender equality mean? To explain this, we will now highlight a number of terms closely related to gender issues, in addition to this term itself.

Equality means sameness or equivalence; in Arabic, it is 'musawa'. Gender equality, on the other hand, refers to the equal status of men and women in exercising their rights to play a role in both the domestic and public spheres. They have the right to participate in social life across the political, legal, economic and educational spheres, and to share in the benefits of development. The realisation of gender equality is characterised by the absence of discrimination between men and women in terms of access, opportunities for participation, control over development, and the attainment of equal and fair benefits from development.

Meanwhile, gender justice refers to a process and the fair treatment of both women and men. Gender justice means that there is no longer a double burden, subordination, marginalisation or violence against either women or men. However, in patriarchal cultures, women are often labelled as marginalised, subordinate, stereotyped, burdened by a double burden, and subjected to harsh treatment. Gender awareness and justice are not merely a matter of discrimination in terms of access, participation, control over development, and the equitable and fair distribution of the benefits of a nation's development.

Critique of Patriarchy and the Gender Equality Perspective

The history of pre-Islamic Arabia records and regards women as beings of lesser worth. Women were viewed solely as vessels for procreation, and their status was more or less equivalent to that of property. Women could be bequeathed and had no right to inherit or enjoy the same rights as men. The plight of women at that time was truly tragic, as their circumstances were extremely bleak and distressing. Their position was entirely subordinate to that of men, and they were also marginalised. A notorious tradition of pre-Islamic Arab society at that time was that if a family had a daughter, she would be buried alive. Such a culture runs counter to the spirit of humanism in Islamic teachings and constitutes a violation of God's will, which is that women should be born into this world.

The emergence of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula brought a breath of fresh air to the lives and status of women. Islam seeks to eradicate all forms of oppression and injustice, including by upholding the dignity and honour of women. Islam grants women a place in both the domestic and public spheres. Among Islam's missions is to defend the vulnerable and uphold justice for both the powerful and the weak. As a religion of mercy, Islam strongly opposes the pre-Islamic traditions that dehumanised women. The history of humankind records how the early days of Islam upheld the dignity of women. The Prophet Muhammad brought about a social revolution regarding the existence and status of women in social life.

Women played a role that cannot be taken 'lightly' during the early days of Islam's growth, both in the domestic and public spheres. Women also assisted the Prophet Muhammad on the battlefield. Khadijah was the only woman to sacrifice her entire fortune for the success of Islam's mission and to establish justice across the Arabian Peninsula. Ummu Syurayk assisted the Prophet Muhammad's da'wah by secretly persuading the women of Mecca to convert from idolatry to Islam and embrace the faith. Although the Qur'an has exposed the discriminatory and exploitative pre-Islamic traditions towards women, the provisions regarding women set out in the Qur'an are definitive. These provisions should be understood as moral ideals and a spirit that upholds the dignity of women. The Prophet Muhammad laid the initial foundations for the way women are to be respected. Even Islamic teachings, as Robert Bellah put it, "were too modern for their time", yet they still face much criticism for their gender bias.

Many thinkers, observers and critics have a misguided view of Islamic teachings regarding women. According to Ali Asghar, they lack an understanding of the origins and development

of Islam and Sharia. They assume, firstly, that Sharia is entirely divine in nature and, secondly, that it is immutable. Such views are often discussed in public forums and are subsequently reinforced by citing the ideas of conservative scholars. Yet the teachings of Islam during the time of the Prophet Muhammad succeeded in breaking down the excessively patriarchal culture that was deeply rooted in Arab society.

In the early days of Muslim society, women held a position of honour within the domestic sphere. This is stated by Allah the Almighty in Surah al-Ahzab: 33, which reads: *“And stay in your homes and do not display yourselves like those of the pre-Islamic era* This verse serves as the theological foundation for how Islam values women. The social and socio-cultural context in which this verse was revealed was one of threat and a lack of security for women should they take on a role in the public sphere. On the other hand, there is a verse which, at first glance, describes the rights of men and women as differing according to the efforts each makes: *“Men have a share of what they have earned, and women have a share of what they have earned”* (Surah al-Nisa’: 32). This verse demonstrates that Islam does indeed recognise women’s efforts, just as God recognises men’s efforts.

The Reconstruction of Family Leadership in a Contemporary Context

Islamic teachings, as reflected in commentaries and classical Islamic texts, appear to relegate women to a domestic role. Women’s roles seem to be reduced to that of mere ‘companions’, and there are even sayings that feel unfair, such as ‘*suwargo nunut neroko katut*’. In Javanese society, the slogan ‘*kitchen, well, bed*’ is still commonly heard. Women are treated as second-class citizens, or perhaps even lower. The roles they play within the domestic sphere remain heavily dependent on the position of their husbands, who hold the status of head of the family.

In his exegesis *Fi Dzilal al-Qur’an*, Sayyid Quthub refers to Surah al-Nisa’ verse 34, explicitly positioning women within the domestic sphere. Although he also emphasises that this verse does not imply a prohibition on women playing a role in the public sphere. However, upon closer examination, Quthub’s paradigm regarding women and that of several figures who follow his thinking clearly advocates for women to manage the household. Yet, in the reality of early Islamic history, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not restrict women’s roles solely to the domestic sphere.

The theological basis for Islamic teachings on the status of women stems from Surah al-Nisa': 34. This verse clearly states that al-rijal (men) are the leaders of women. Indeed, Jalaluddin al-Suyuti interprets the term *quwwamun* as *musallathun*, meaning 'to have authority over'. Al-Suyuti's interpretation may be considered reasonable when linked to the two conditions accompanying the term '*qawwamun*': '*bima fadhdhallah*' and '*bima anfaqu*'. If these two justifications are combined in the figure of the man as head of the household, then the man's authority over women naturally becomes complete and dominant. This is all the more so if the wife has a low level of education and lacks economic independence, compounded by the fact that she comes from a family of modest means.

Returning to the main issue of the word al-rijal, how can this word be understood and interpreted in a way that leads to a more egalitarian outcome, unlike the interpretations of conventional exegetes? A number of Islamic thinkers and advocates for gender equality have attempted to analyse the word al-rijal from a grammatical perspective, for example Muhammad Abduh, Ali Asghar and Zaitunah Subhan. The article 'al' attached to rijal indicates that the word rijal is definite, specific and particular; it is not intended to refer to all men. In Surah al-Nisa': 34, the word 'rijal' is linked to the word 'nisa''. Gender terms in the Qur'an carry significant meaning. The word 'nisa' has feminine, domestic and gentle connotations, and even implies a tendency to be forgetful, whilst the word 'rijal' can mean 'one who walks'. Thus, the sociological meaning aligns with its literal sense: 'rijal' signifies movement and engagement in the public sphere, whilst women are associated with the home. If a woman is more active, then sociologically she becomes 'rijal'; conversely, if a 'rijal' remains at home, sociologically he becomes 'nisa'."

The second issue concerns the word 'qawwamun', which means leader, ruler, protector and guide. Contemporary exegetes interpret this word in a more moderate and functional sense. The word 'qawwamun', derived from the root 'qiwam', according to al-Maraghi, refers to the guidance and oversight of leadership in carrying out what the husband directs and paying attention to all his actions. The husband's leadership role within the home can only be fulfilled if he meets certain criteria as set out in Surah al-Nisa': 34. These criteria are, firstly, that the husband can demonstrate his superiority in terms of guidance, education and protection. Secondly, the husband must be able to provide for the family's needs in terms of clothing, food and shelter. Thirdly, the husband possesses the advantages established by Islamic law, such as

the right to a double share of inheritance compared to that of women, and he must use these advantages to support his wife.

The husband's role in the household is functional in nature. A husband's role within the household is to provide for the family and meet its needs. It is because of this role that a husband becomes the head of the household. Meanwhile, a wife also has the role of carrying out domestic duties within the family. A husband's role in meeting material needs is crucial to his position as head of the household; in addition, he is also responsible for meeting non-material needs, such as protecting, guiding and educating the family.

However, if a wife who excels in household matters becomes the backbone of the family providing for the family and meeting their daily needs then she may become the head of the household. The possibility of a wife becoming the head of the household, and of women's leadership in society, is based on the teachings of the Qur'an. Furthermore, there is a hadith narrated by Imam al-Bukhari and Muslim which explains that every person is a leader. The husband is the leader of his family, whilst the wife is also a leader within her husband's household, and each will be held accountable for their actions. Historical accounts in the Qur'an also demonstrate that women can be leaders in government and successfully bring prosperity to their countries, such as Queen Balqis of the Kingdom of Saba'.

In reality today, many women are capable of taking on a leadership role within the household. A number of wives are able to manage and handle their own affairs, look after their children when their husbands are away or have passed away, and so on. There are quite a few wives whose husbands have left home for long periods, or who have divorced their husbands whether they are still alive or have passed away who are able to manage household affairs, provide for the family's needs, and protect, guide and educate their children.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this discussion suggests that if a wife who plays a leading role in the household becomes the backbone of the family providing for the family and meeting its needs then she can act as the head of the household. Today, many women are capable of taking on this leadership role within the household. They are able to manage and handle their own affairs, as well as those of their children, when their husband is away or has passed away, and so on. There are many wives whose husbands have left home for long periods, or who have divorced their husbands whether the husband is still alive or has passed away who are able to manage

household affairs, provide for the family's needs, and protect, guide and educate their children; they can therefore be described as heads of the family.

REFERENCES

Abû al-Qâsim Mahmûd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhshari. *al-Kasyâf 'an Haqâiq Gawâmid al-Tanzîl wa 'Uyûn al-Aqâwîl, fi Wujûh al-Ta'wîl*, ditahqiq oleh 'Adil Ahmad 'Abdul Maujûd dan Ali Muhammad Mu'awwad, Juz. II. Riyâd: Maktabah 'Abikân, 1998 M/1418 H.

Abu Hasan Ali al-Naisaburi. *Asbab al-Nuzul al-Qur'an*. t.k: Dar Ishlah, 1992.

Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Hajar al-'Asqalâni. *Fath al-Bâry bi Syarh Sahîh al-Bukhâri*. Juz. XIII, Riyâd: Maktabah al-Malik Fahd, 2001 M/ 1421 H.

Ahmad Mustafa al-Maragi. *Tafsir al-Maraghi*. terj. Hery Noer Aly, dkk., Jilid. 5, Cet. ke-2, Semarang: CV. Toha Putra, 1993.

Al-Râgib al-Asfahâni. *Mufradât Alfâz al-Qur'ân*, Juz. II. Damaskus: Dâr al-Nasyr, t.th.

Asghar Ali Engineer. "Perempuan dalam Syari'ah: Perspektif Feminisme dalam Penafsiran Islam", *Ulumul Qur'an*, No. 3, Vol. V, tahun 1994, 62.

Asghar Ali Engineer. *Hak-hak Perempuan dalam Islam*. terj. Farid Wajdi & Cici Farkha Asgaf, Yogyakarta: LP3ES, 1994.

Burhân al-Dîn Abî al-Hasan Ibrâhîm ibn 'Umar al-Biqâ'i. *Nazm al-Durar fî Tanâsub al-Ayât wa al-Suwar*. Juz. V, Kairo: Dâr al-Kitâb al-Islamiy, t.th.

Chumaidi Syarif Romas. *Wacana Teologi Kontemporer*. Yogyakarta: PT. Tiara Wacana Yogya, 2000.

Fuâd Ni'mah. *Mulakhkhas Qawâ'id al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah*, Cet. IX, Juz II. Damaskus: Dâr Hikmah, t.th.

Hassan Turabi, "On The Position of Women in Islam and in Islamic Society", dalam <http://www.islamfortoday.com/turabi01.htm>,

Helen Tierney (ed), *Women's Studies Encyclopedia*, Vol 1, New York: Green Wood Press.

Ibn Manzûr. *Lisân al-'Arab*, Juz. 12. Kairo: Dâr al-Ma'ârif, t.th.

John M. Echols dan Hasan Sadily. *Kamus Inggris Indonesia*. Cet XII, Jakarta: Gramedia, 1983.

M. Quraish Shihab. *Tafsir al-Misbah: Pesan dan Keresasian*, Jilid II. Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2000.

Mansour Faqih. *Analisis Gender dan Transformasi Sosial*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2007.

Muhammad Abu Zahra, *Membangun Masyarakat Islam*, terj. Shodiq Nor Rahma. Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1994.

Muhammad ibn Jarîr al-Thabari. *Tafsîr al-Tabari Jâmi' al-Bayân 'an Ta'wîl Âyat al-Qur'ân*. Juz. 6, Kairo: Markaz al-Buhûs wa al-Dirâsât al-'Arabiyyah wa al-Islâmiyyah, 2001 M/ 1422 H.

Mustaqim, Abdul. *Epistemologi tafsir Kontemporer*, Idea Press, 2020.

Nasaruddin Umar; Amany Lubis, "Hawa sebagai Simbol Ketergantungan: Perempuan dalam Kitab Tafsir", dalam Ali Munhanif (Ed.), *Mutiara Terpendam, Perempuan dalam Literatur Islam Klasik*. Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2002.

Nasarudin Umar. *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Qur'an*. Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001.

Nurul Agustina, "Islam, Perempuan dan Negara", *Islamika*, No. 6, tahun 1995.

Salman Harun. *Mutiara Al-Qur'an: Aktualisasi Pesan Al-Qur'an dalam Kehidupan*. Jakarta: Logos, 1999.

Sayyid Quthb. *Fi Zhilâl al-Qur'ân*, Jilid V. Beirut: Dâr al-Syuruq, 1986/1406 H.

Syafiq Hasyim. *Hal-hal yang Tak Terpikirkan: Tentang Isu-isu Keperempuanan dalam Islam*. Bandung: Mizan, 2001.

Syihâb al-Dîn al-Sayyid Mahmûd al-Alûsi, *Rûh al-Ma'âni fî Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-'Azîm wa al-Sab' al-Masâni*. Juz. V. Beirut: Ihyâ al-Turâs al-'Arabi, t.th.

Zaitunah Subhan. *Tafsir Kebencian, Studi Bias Gender dalam Tafsir Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: LkiS, 1999.