

CRITIQUE OF THE CONCEPT OF GENDER FEMINIST INTERPRETATION: A REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to examine and critique the concept of gender in feminist interpretations of the Qur'an through a comparative (*muqarran*) study of contemporary exegeses. The study's background highlights a shift in the meaning of "gender" from a biological category of sex to a social construct that can alter perceptions of a person's sex, and the impact of this shift on the interpretation of Qur'anic verses concerning women specifically issues of leadership (Qur'an, an-Nisa' 4:34), polygyny (an-Nisa' 4:3), and inheritance distribution (an-Nisa' 4:11). The author analyzes contemporary tafsirs as an effort to clarify and counteract distortions in the interpretation of these Qur'anic verses related to the concept of gender. This research uses a qualitative method with a library-based approach and comparative (*muqarran*) analysis to contrast different interpretations. The study maps the methods and interpretive tendencies of feminist exegetes such as Amina Wadud, Zaitunah Subhan, and Nasaruddin Umar, and compares them with contemporary tafsirs including Tafsir al-Munir by Wahbah az-Zuhaili, Tafsir al-Azhar by Buya Hamka, and Tafsir al-Misbah by Quraish Shihab. The findings identify several critiques of feminist interpretations of the gender concept: (1) feminist readings consistently emphasize that women are discriminated against by men in Islamic teachings and the Qur'an—portraying Islam as perpetuating patriarchal culture—which may create the misconception that Islam is discriminatory toward women; (2) there are misconceptions about the concept of gender from an Islamic perspective, such as treating gender as a form of relativism that precludes absolute truth, and using the gender concept to justify sexual deviations (e.g., the increasing visibility of LGBT cases); and (3) several negative social impacts of feminist exegesis on Muslim communities, for example: declining marriage rates due to women's reluctance to accept male leadership in the household, widespread rejection and moves to prohibit polygyny, and resistance to Qur'anic inheritance rules. The thesis concludes by underlining the need for critical reading of feminist gender concepts in Qur'anic interpretation and for comparing them with other contemporary tafsirs. Such balanced readings—attending both to text and context—can correct conceptual and practical deviations in the discourse on gender among Muslim communities, and prevent Islam from being perceived as discriminatory toward women. Islam, in fact, upholds the dignity and worth of every human being, both male and female, and is rahmatan lil-'alamīn.

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INTRODUCTIONS

The history of the modern western feminism movement is divided into 3 waves, each wave fighting for a different aspect but with the same issue, namely freedom and equality for women. Maggie Humm in *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory* divides it into three periods: the first period of the early 20th century demanded equal suffrage. The second period of the 1960s demanded freedom of opinion and behavior as well as equality in the legal and social spheres. The movement is called *women's liberation movements*. The third period began around the 1990s which was a reaction to the failure of the second period. Over time this feminism movement then developed into a gender movement. The word gender originally meant gender. However, it has developed again into a visible difference between men and women in terms of values and behavior. Here the meaning has changed from physical to non-physical, namely behavior. From the difference in behavior, the term gender has changed again to be broader. Gender means a cultural concept that seeks to make a distinction in terms of roles, behaviors, mentalities, and emotional characteristics between men and women that develop in society. The standard concept is one that develops in society. Finally, the meaning of gender becomes no longer *real* as it develops in society, but is only a *cultural expectation* for men and women. (Maksum et al., 2025)

So the term gender has undergone a shift in meaning which initially gender or *sex* changed to another meaning. The term *Sex* is used in general to identify the difference between men and women in terms of anatomy, biological or sex. The differences can be traced to the composition of hormones in the body, physical anatomy, reproduction and other biological properties. Meanwhile, gender is now used to study social, cultural, psychological, and other non-biological aspects. So gender *studies* are related to societal decisions regarding the determination of a person as male or female. Thus, the understanding of the concepts of gender and feminism is the result of human experience in western civilization and does not occur in the history of Islamic civilization. What Muslims need to highlight is that the two understandings have two dimensions: *first*, this understanding arises from a condition experienced by western society, *second*, that condition then becomes the basis for the application of these two understandings in society. The confusion of thinking from various understandings produced by western civilization brings a confusing mindset among people around the world, especially Muslims who ignore western understanding. (Abdullah, 2025)

In Islamic civilization, emancipation, feminism, or gender movements are not found, what exists is compatibility to empower women. But it is not to equate women with men in all aspects. For example, Muhammad Abduh gave the idea that the education of girls and Muslim women should be given more attention, the goal is for them to understand their rights and responsibilities as a Muslim woman in the development of the ummah. The same view was also expressed by Hasan At-Turabi from Sudan who affirmed that Islam recognizes women's rights in the public sphere, including the right and freedom to express opinions, participate in elections, trade, attend congregational prayers, participate in the battlefield and others. Not to forget other scholars such as Sheikh Mahmud Syaltut, Sayyid Qutb, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Jamal Badawi, also had the same idea. This confusing condition was also driven by the situation of the decline of scientific civilization in Islam after the fall of Baghdad, so that education for women became forgotten for several centuries. (Sholikhah, 2025)

For Muslim scholars who are uncritical and amazed by Western progress, they will generally be eager to import these ideas of feminism and gender equality. They consider this theory of gender equality and feminism as a development of civilization or a new theory that Muslims need to follow. Because of that spirit, they criticize and correct Islamic teachings as gender biased. Sharia laws on men and women are so differentiated that they depict the oppression of women. Qasim Amin, among Muslim scholars who were influenced by this idea, wrote the books *Tahriru al-Mar'ah* or The Liberation of Women and *al-Mar'ah al-Jadidah* or The New Woman. In both books he called for the idea of women's emancipation in the Western style. According to him: "*If Muslims want to advance, throw away religious doctrines that supposedly oppress and shackle women, such as the command to wear the hijab, polygamy, and so on.*" Because of her work, she is touted as the father of Arab feminism. (Asparina, 2021)

This idea of Qasim Amin, as in the Islamic intellectual tradition, immediately received rebuttals and rejections from scholars, including from Shaykh Abdul Halim Muhammad Abu Syuqqah in the form of a work entitled *The Liberation of Women in the Period of Treatises Tahriru al-Mar'ah fi Asyir-Risalah*. In his work, which is the result of an intensive study of classical Islamic literature, he concludes that Islam turns out to be very emancipatory in nature. The arrival of Islam has led to a gender revolution in the 7th century AD. This religion actually came to liberate women from the dominance of Jahiliyah culture which is known to be very tyrannical and barbaric. In addition, she also found that after the advent of Islam, women began to be recognized for their rights as human beings and citizens (not as commodities), participating and playing an active role in various sectors, including politics and the military. Even in its history, it turns out that women in the time of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) were more advanced and had their human rights recognized than in the pre-Islamic period. This conclusion is also agreed by some Western researchers. (Wijaya, 2009)

In Islam, the relationship between a man and a woman (husband and wife) on the one hand is structural, where men are placed as leaders for women, and no serious problems arise in society because of this structure. But on the other hand, the relationship is also collaborative-functional, meaning that men both in the household and in society cooperate with women without any element of oppression at all. Women in Islam receive perfect honor and respect. The conclusion of Muhammad Iqbal, one of the Islamic reformers, in this case it is true that women in Islam get freedom and honor at the same time, but in the West women only get freedom without honor. The understanding of feminism and gender equality is an interesting issue among urban Muslims, even though it was initially just an elitist discourse, but it has quickly developed into a movement and is now being fought, defended and defended as an ideology. Because it comes from the problems of Western society, it is supported by the West through Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Some NGOs that were previously engaged in the development of rural societies have turned to movements that focus on several things, including: the defense of women's civil rights, the defense of women's reproductive rights (in the style of liberal feminism), the defense of traditional values and women's humanity (in the style of reformative and romantic feminists), and the elimination of male domination over women (in the style of radical feminism). It was this radical feminist movement that provoked the need for equal rights, in obtaining sexual satisfaction that then triggered the birth of the LGBT that is now emotionally developed. (Wijaya, 2004)

From various controversies caused by the spread of gender equality ideas. It turns out that it does not only appear among the general public, this also infects Islamic universities. Some Islamic colleges later established Women's Studies Centers, or specialized graduate programs for women's studies. This is a strategic step for the spread of feminism and gender equality. Because in higher education, changes in the way people think about the relationship between men and women can be spread. Unfortunately, many Islamic universities are not critical in facing this gender equality ideology movement. On the contrary, because they are hegemonized by this ideology, they are actually critical of Islamic law. They suspect that the scholars interpreted the verses and hadiths of the Prophet according to the interests of men or to maintain their dominance over women. (Ismail, 2003)

This is one of the views colored by hermeneutics. A postmodern interpretive philosophy that interprets all texts with, referring to, political interests, social situations, historical historical journeys and others. The interpretation of scholars is considered a human view (*human construction*), which is relative and can still be changed. This perspective supported by the hermeneutic interpretation method is used by gender activists in criticizing the interpretation of scholars, about the relationship between men and women. As a result, after criticizing the scholars, Muslim scholars in Islamic colleges reinterpreted the Prophet's verses and hadiths about the relationship between men and women with a new interpretation. It does not matter whether the laws are definite (*qat'iyyat muhkamat*) or ambiguous (*zanniyāt mutasyābihat*). From the massive movements of feminism and gender equality that are defended, defended and disseminated with this very high spirit and importance, it can be concluded that this movement is not just an ordinary social movement, but has become an ideological movement. (Subhan, 2015)

Confusion of thinking and misunderstanding of a meaning need something to straighten it out. In the treasures of the Islamic world, various terms are known, one of which is *the Qur'anic Worldview*. The term *Qur'anic worldview* here means how the Qur'an views world affairs. *The Qur'anic Worldview* has an emphasis on morality and the spirit of contextualization, interpretation, and a comprehensive or holistic paradigm in reading ideas that are purely sourced from the Qur'an. There is an important finding in Abdul Mustaqim's research related to the epistemology of contemporary interpretation, he mentioned that the basic principles of interpretation or *the Qur'anic worldview* are very important. That is, what affects the development of interpretation is not only socio-historical conditions or changes in the times, but also the epistemological paradigm or *Qur'anic worldview* of the interpreter. In fact, the research gives more accentuation to *the Qur'anic elements of* a mufassir to his efforts to creatively and productively design his own interpretation methodology. (Zulaiha, 2016)

So the term *Qur'anic Worldview* has a deep meaning to unravel various problems in world affairs. Including for gender problems that are already so complex. One of the Muslim scholars from Pakistan, Fazlurrahman, has a perspective on the term *Qur'anic Worldview*. Fazlurrahman explained the importance of a mufassir to first have a *master-idea*. In the sense of a basic principle that changes the basics of perspective that has been embraced in seeing reality. Until they are able to try to provide fresh and precise solutions to *the age-old problems*, which disturb (*vexed*) the human mind. "Included in the context of the Qur'an, Fazlurrahman said: "The Qur'an itself not only contains many clear philosophical teachings, but can also be a strong catalyst to build a comprehensive *worldview* and in line with these teachings". (Sutrisno, 2006)

From the above explanation, it shows the need for a mufassir to have insight into *the Qur'anic Worldview*, so as not to be mistaken and over-the-top in interpreting a verse in the Qur'an. Lately, the ideology of the concept of gender and feminism has not only become an ideology of thought, but has penetrated into the world of interpretation. This is marked by many mufassir who provide special interpretations with this theme which gave birth to the term feminist interpretation. Feminist interpretation is a necessity for its adherents, The existence of a feminist interpretation that is friendly to gender is very important. to rebuild the understanding of the Qur'an which contains relationships between human beings, both men and women. by emphasizing the spirit of equality and justice. Feminist interpretation was born out of dissatisfaction with the results of classical and contemporary scholars' interpretations which were dominated by male mufassir so that they were more supportive and beneficial to men's interests (gender-biased interpretation). The majority of feminist interpreters criticize the centrality and dominance of men in interpreting the Qur'an. On this basis, most interpretations of the Qur'an have formed a patriarchal paradigm of understanding the Qur'an and Islam, giving the impression of inferiority to women's position and elevating male superiority. (Yarun et al., 2023)

In contemporary times, feminist interpretations continue to evolve starting from models and types of feminist interpretations are rapidly evolving. In fact, this feminist interpretation is written not only by women but also by men. Interpreters of foreign Muslim feminists such as Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, Qasim Amin and Asghar Ali Engineer, as well as Indonesian Muslim feminists such as Siti Musdah Mulia, Zaitunah Subhan, Nasaruddin Umar, and Nashrudin Baidan. They seek to produce feminist interpretive products, which have a variety of approaches and patterns, which are typical in order to reinterpret gender-biased Qur'anic verses. as in Surah An-Nisa which is interpreted impressively that the position of women as subordinate to men because women (Eve) were created from the ribs of the Prophet Adam (AS). In fact, the mission carried by the Qur'an is to uphold egalitarian principles, build fair and equal gender relations without discriminating against each other. (Hidayati, 2018)

This happens because many verses in the Qur'an discuss the aspect of women. Starting from equality, leadership, inheritance distribution, polygamy, testimony, talaq or divorce, dress rules to cover the awrah, and education. In Islam, women also have the same rights and opportunities as men in the workplace (in the public sector), without having to ignore their roles, positions, and positions as a woman. An example of a verse of the Qur'an that does not matter when women have to have a career and appear in the public sphere, as intended in QS. al-Nisa' (4):

32, QS. Al-Hujurat (49): 13, and QS. al-Nahl (16): 58-59. In QS. Al-Hujurat (49):13 states that women have a fairly good position and social strata and are equal to men, in the sense that women and men have the same degree of humanity. The main mission of Islam is to liberate human beings from all forms of injustice, inequality, and anarchy. As in QS. Al-Nahl (16): 58-59, voicing liberation. Islam has fought for women's rights and made women an inseparable part of religious life.

Based on the background information, this study focuses on three main problems. First, how the concept of gender in feminist interpretation can influence women's views on the interpretation of the Qur'an in contemporary times. Second, what are the negative impacts of the concept of gender in feminist interpretations on Islamic society. Third, why the study of criticism of the concept of gender in feminist interpretation through the study of contemporary interpretations can be used as a solution to the deviation of the concept of gender that appears in modern Islamic discourse.

In line with the formulation of this problem, this study aims to find out and analyze how the concept of gender in feminist interpretation affects women's views in understanding the Qur'an in the contemporary era. In addition, this study also aims to uncover and examine the negative impact caused by the application of gender concepts in feminist interpretations of Islamic society. Finally, this study seeks to analyze how the study of criticism of the concept of gender in feminist interpretation through the study of various contemporary interpretations can be an alternative solution in straightening out the deviations of the concept of gender that occur among modern interpreters.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research, because the focus of the study lies on the analysis of texts and thoughts that develop in contemporary interpretive works with a feminist perspective. This approach was chosen to dig deep into how the concept of gender is understood, interpreted, and critiqued in various modern interpretations without involving the collection of field data. Thus, all data used in this study are sourced from relevant written materials. (Rachman et al., 2024)

The data sources in this study are divided into two, namely primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources include the works of tafsir and writings of Muslim feminist figures such as Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, and Riffat Hassan who directly address gender issues in the Qur'an. Meanwhile, secondary sources are books, journal articles, and other scholarly works that contain criticism of feminist interpretations and contemporary mufasir views on the concept of gender in Islam.

Data collection is carried out through documentation studies, namely by browsing, reading, and reviewing various relevant literature from libraries, academic journal databases, and online scientific publications. The data collected were then analyzed using content analysis to interpret the meanings contained in feminist interpretive texts and compare them with contemporary interpretations that criticized the approach. The analysis is carried out in a descriptive-analytical manner, by describing the ideas of feminist figures, then examining them critically based on the principles of classical interpretation and Islamic scientific methodology.

In the analysis process, this study also uses a thematic interpretation approach (*maudhūfī*), which is by tracing the theme of "gender" in the Qur'an as interpreted by feminist figures and then comparing it with contemporary interpretations of mufasir who have different views. This approach is seen as effective in understanding the interpretive patterns used and assessing the extent to which the developed concept of gender is in line with or contrary to the basic principles of interpretation in the Islamic tradition.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Criticism of the concept of gender Feminist interpretation in an Islamic perspective

The concept of gender refers to cultural or social differences, namely a gender, both male and female according to physical or social circumstances. Pamela Sue Anderson said that the term gender, which has been defined as a cultural construct, in recent times has been sharply opposed to sex as a natural or biological characteristic. WHO

defines gender as a set of roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that are considered appropriate for socially constructed men and women in a society. In the issue of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT), gender is associated with sexual orientation. A person who feels that his or her gender identity does not align with his or her gender can call himself or herself intergender, as in the case of transvestites. So this becomes a disorder of thinking, where finally the person who has an aberration or abnormality in him, gets a validation, instead of being cured but justified these behaviors. Some of the critical arguments regarding the concept of gender are feminist interpretations in an Islamic perspective including: (Harahap et al., 2022)

a. The concept of gender is relativistic

Gender has become a common term in society, this becomes a mess in thinking when the term *sex* is equated with *gender* where finally, many terms appear in the wider community such as, gender equality, gender bias, (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) LGBT and so on. The emergence of the idea of the concept of gender comes from the view of some people who consider women to be in an unfavorable condition and underdeveloped when compared to men. Women are always limited in doing something, especially when it comes to the public sphere. Under the pretext of caring about the fate of women, feminist activists with the idea of gender equality began to direct the thoughts of women in the world to begin to get out of the confinement they assumed. In the context of women, sex or gender is closely related and with the reproductive rights that women naturally have. Reproductive rights related to breastfeeding, menstruation, and childbirth experienced by women. However, it is different from men who have never experienced such a natural event. This means that there are many fundamental differences between sex and gender . (Suntoro, 2024)

Sex is more of a form of gender labeling and habits of natural activity, and is absolute, while gender is a mapping of a person's role that is carried out at any time by both parties, male and female and is more relative and relative. Therefore, gender is only a labeling that exists in reality that can be exchanged between men and women. For example, gentle, rude, crying and angry nature. Because gender is not really a nature, but a certain modification of the social construct in which men and women live. In other words, gender is the result of certain traditions, cultures, religions and ideologies that recognize the boundaries of space and time and directly shape the characteristics of men and women. Gender has a dependence on the values embraced by society so that it determines what men and women do. Thus, gender can change from certain situations or traditions to another. So in this case, the meaning of the concept of gender is relative because it can change. This is a risky thing, where a person's gender can change. (Wadud, 1999)

b. The concept of gender shields the justification of sexual deviance

In the above point, it is known that the concept of gender is relative, this is a way to enter sexual deviance because of its relative nature. It could be that in one place LBGT behavior is strongly condemned, but in another place it is actually legalized. So the concept of gender becomes a shield of justification, the existence of deviant behavior in the name of gender freedom. Deviant sexual behavior (LGBT) is absolutely forbidden in Islam. It is because of this behavior that the Qur'an calls the Prophet Luth (the sodomites) as outrageous and exaggerated (*musrifun*), beyond the limits (*'adun*), and ignorant. This can be seen in (QS. Al-A'raf: 81, QS. Al-Shu'ara:166, QS. Al-Naml: 55). The word "*israf*" which forms the word "*musrifun*" means behavior that exceeds the limits of propriety. The opponent is "*iqtisad*" (simple). The Qur'an tells that the sexual crimes of the Prophet Luth were a type of iniquity that the ummah had not committed before, so it was called "*bid'ah al-ma'asi*". The badness of this behavior has exceeded the limit, a crime. So it is not exaggerated if they are ignorant, because they have considered good something that should be reprehensible. (Rusydi, 2020)

However, recently, liberal and feminist human rights activist groups have been very active in defending the LGBT community from all sides. Both in terms of religion, culture, law and education. From the religious side, there are those who relativize the haram of LGBT and consider it a matter *of khilafiyah* in fiqh. The absence of mention of

the type of LGBT punishment in the Qur'an is used as an excuse to blur its illegality. So the question is, If every despicable act whose punishment is not detailed in the Qur'an can be doubted, what about beating one's parents and gossiping about people? No one will justify the above behaviors, because they do not find the type of punishment in the Qur'an. It is very difficult to believe that there are healthy people who campaign for the right to gossip about others under the pretext of human rights and benefits. Chaos The liberal view of the idea of Islam, which is more accommodating and humane towards sexual deviants, has actually damaged the teachings of Islam itself. Because, how can it be justified the logic that says: "The important thing is to be pious and *fastabiqul khairat*, regardless of sexual orientation". What a shallow and subverted logic. Similar to the belief of the Murji'ah sect, that disobedience does not affect the quality of faith. (Anwar, 2015)

One of the countries that is often used as an example in gender freedom is Thailand. Thailand is often promoted as a gay haven and tolerant of LGBT culture, but that hasn't stopped liberal and feminist human rights activists from demanding more "rights." The acceptance of LGBT nationally has actually intensified activists to urge the state to take action against people who are still discriminatory and view LGBT taboos, especially rural communities and their families. Enjoying freedom of expression and supported by the constitution, Thailand, which has legalized sodomy and banned discrimination, has not satisfied LGBT activists. They even demanded a legal umbrella, which specifically protects sexual orientation and gender identity. They also protested against the ban on transgender women changing their gender identity on their ID cards and criticized marriage laws, which are based on gender structures and traditional family systems. The health ministry's statement on 29/01/2002 that homosexuality is no longer considered a mental illness. Instead, it makes LGBT activists busy prohibiting differences, especially for those who still consider transsexuals to be abnormal and psychologically unhealthy. In addition, they also demanded the replacement of textbooks in schools that portray LGBT as an unnatural sexual orientation. With the spirit of incomplicity, several things have been achieved, including: the revocation of the regulation of the Rajabhat Institute Council (12/1996) prohibiting gay people from enrolling in all teacher training institutes, because LGBT at that time was considered deviant and unfit to be prospective teachers. Thailand's Ministry of Communication and Information has withdrawn its appeal asking all television stations not to show transgender and transsexual (27/4/1999), even though the appeal is to prevent children from imitating LGBT behavior. (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2016)

Until now, advocacy strategies to fight religion-based stigmas and norms attached to LGBT orientation continue to be developed, until equality is achieved in all fields. So the rise of LGBT globalization is a movement that cannot be underestimated. The state must not take a neutral stance between *haq* and *null* under the pretext of human rights, freedom and social facts. Because not all social facts must be preserved." Tell the truth, not justify the facts," KH advised. Hasan Abdullah Sahal. Once the space for LGBT is opened, the impact of the state must overhaul the legal, educational, social, civil and religious systems to support the existence of LGBT. From this argument, the author can see that the concept of gender is no longer just about talking about masculine or feminine traits in men and women. But it has penetrated into many things ranging from the legalization of deviant behavior (LGBT), as well as the rise of transgender cases. Where a person can make changes to their genitals because they feel that they do not match their identity. Of course, in Islam this is a taboo thing, changing the genitals from birth just because they feel that they do not match their personality, except in the case of *khunsa*. In Islam, the concept of gender becomes a shield to justify the deviant behavior under the pretext of human rights, gender freedom and various other justification arguments. If it is not criticized, this gender concept will be even wilder and obscure what is wrong and void. (Maksum et al., 2025)

c. The concept of gender does not exist in the term *Islamic Worldview*

In Islam's view, it does not recognize the term gender which indicates the existence of an inequality relationship between the roles of men and women so that it demands equality. Because in the view of Islam, both men and women have a noble position in the side of Allah SWT. However, it does not mean that men and women must be equal in all things and eventually mix the meaning of "equal" with "equal" because men and women have different natures. The

concepts of gender and feminism are original from the human experience in Western civilization and do not occur in the history of Islamic civilization. So what needs to be observed is that the concept has two dimensions: first, that it arises from a condition experienced by Western society and second, that condition then becomes the basis for the application of the concept in Western civilizational society. (Abdullah, 2025)

In Islamic civilization the gender equality movement does not exist, there is only awareness to empower women. But it is not to equate women with men in all aspects. Shaykh Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905 AD), for example, threw the idea that the education of Muslim girls and women should be given attention, the goal was for them to understand their rights and responsibilities as Muslim women in the development of the Ummah. The same view was expressed by Hasan at-Turabi from Sudan, who affirmed that Islam recognizes women's rights in the public sphere, including the right and freedom to express opinions, participate in elections, trade, attend congregational prayers, participate in the battlefield and others. Not to forget other scholars such as Shaykh Mahmūd Syaltut, Sayyid Qutb, Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaradawi and Jamal A. Badawi, also had the same idea. This state of confusion was driven by the situation of the decline of scientific civilization in Islam after the fall of Baghdad, so that education for women became forgotten for several centuries. (Sholikhah, 2025)

The beauty of Islam as a religion and the way of salvation can be seen from its teachings, which cover all aspects of life. Likewise in positioning men and women. In Islam, men and women are not seen as separate, partial, and conflicting individuals from each other. Each of them has different rights and obligations, both as children, wives, husbands, and parents. The rights and obligations of men and women are built on the principles of harmony that support each other. Everything is so beautifully and impressively arranged. Giving men the responsibility of being the head of the household, does not then give absolute authority to men to act like masters to their slaves (as depicted in the concept of gender). Leaders not only set an example but also set an example for the whole household. Leaders are the supporters, protectors, and responsible for the success of all members in achieving the title of piety. Therefore, a leader is required not to be easily provoked by emotions and to be temperate. The following daily story of Caliph Umar bin Khattab deserves to be used as an example of how Islam views the relationship between men and women. (Asparina, 2021)

It is said that a man came to the house of the caliph Umar bin Khattab. He wanted to complain about his wife's temperament. Once there, he stood waiting for the door. Suddenly he heard Umar's wife scolding him. Umar was just silent, not replying to his wife's scolding. The man went home and said to himself: *"If only an Admiral of the Believers, the leader of the believers, is like that, then what about me?"* Not long after, Umar came out and saw the man walking away from his house, and called to him: *"What do you need?"* He replied: *"O Commander of the Faithful, I have come to complain to you about the temperament of my wife who likes to scold me. Then I heard your wife scolding you. So I said to myself, 'If the Commander of the Believers is patient in the face of his wife's scolding, why should I complain?'"* So Umar said: "O my brother, indeed you are patient, for indeed my wife has a right over me; she is the one who has cooked food for me, washed my clothes, and nursed my child, even though all of these things are not obligatory on her. In addition, he has reassured my heart not to fall into forbidden acts. Therefore I am patient with all his sacrifices" "O Commander of the Faithful, my wife is also said by the man. So Umar advised him: "Be patient, O my brother. Because your wife's scolding was only for a short time.

The above story gives us an important lesson about the compatibility of rights for all family members. Including children's rights to breastfeed and good education. On the other hand, women are also created with different natures. A woman's highest happiness is if she can serve her beloved. Women's sacrifice and devotion are expressions of love, not oppression! Feminists' cries for "equality" in all areas of life are simply the experiences of individuals who fail to find the meaning of a family. Feminism often begins with personal acts filled with hatred for men. In fact, hatred is the greatest of the diseases that eat away at the human body. Because hatred attacks humans from the side of soul, mind, heart, and feeling. It sucks the values of beauty and superiority, extinguishing the light of conscience, spirit, and self-clarity. As well as drying up potential sources of virtue. Therefore, the author considers that in Islamic civilization

there is no known term gender concept. However, because there are many factors that affect a theory or concept in the wider community. The term gender, which incidentally comes from Western civilization, is widely echoed and adopted. Finally, it began to penetrate widely into Islamic civilization in today's contemporary era. So nowadays many Muslim scholars have finally researched this concept through Islamic lenses. Even in the interpretation of the Qur'an, there is finally a pattern of feminism that discusses verses about gender in the Qur'an. For some people this may be a progressive step in the treasure trove of Qur'anic interpretation. But for others, constructive criticism is needed. so as not to be excessive in interpreting the concept of gender, especially in Islamic civilization.

Critical analysis, comparison of interpretation of gender-themed Qur'an verses between feminist interpretations and contemporary interpretations.

In this analysis, the author will examine several comparisons of the interpretation of the Qur'anic verses with the theme of gender, between feminist interpretations and contemporary interpretations. In this study, the author focuses on several feminist figures who have interpretations in the Qur'an regarding gender themes, namely Amina Wadud, Zaitunah Subhan, and Nasaruddin Umar. These figures have their own interpretations of the Qur'an's gender-themed verses. they criticize some interpretations in the Qur'an that are considered oppressive to the concept of gender. So to counter or counteract feminist interpretations. The author also focuses on several contemporary interpretations that interpret gender-themed verses of the Qur'an, namely the Tafsir of Al-Munir by Wahbah Zuhaili, the Tafsir of Al-Azhar by Buya Hamka, and the Tafsir of Al-Misbah by Quraish Shihab. Some of the verses that are the theme in this study are (QS. An-Nisa: 34, on leadership), (QS. An-Nisa: 3, on polygamy), and (QS. An-Nisa: 11, about the distribution of inheritance).

Interpretation of QS. An-Nisa: 34 on leadership, between the interpretation of Amina Wadud and Wahbah Zuhaili in the tafsir of Al-Munir

Amina Wadud in her interpretation of the verse containing the word *قَوَّامُونَ* (qawwāmūn)—"Men are leaders for women"—states that the meaning of qawwamah is functional and social, not natural or natural. He interprets that the role of men as "protectors" and "breadwinners" arose because of the socio-economic conditions of the Arab society of the 7th century AD, not because of the biological superiority of men. Thus, if men no longer have material advantages or economic responsibilities, then the function of qawwamah is no longer attached to them. In Wadud's view, linguistically qawwāmūn refers to those who bear the necessities of life, not leaders in the authoritative sense. (Wadud, 1999)

Wadud considers that the social order of Arab society at the time of the Qur'an was patriarchal and androcentric, namely placing men as the center of social norms and authority. In this kind of culture, women are seen in terms of their useful value for men, especially their reproductive functions. He argued that the Qur'an descended in such a cultural context, so that the adjustment of revelation to the social conditions of the time was often misunderstood as legitimacy against the patriarchal system. In fact, according to him, the Qur'an actually seeks to improve the social order gradually in order to lead to gender equality and justice. (Putra et al., 2019)

The principle of leadership in the Qur'an, according to Wadud, is not based on gender, but on a person's qualifications and ability to fulfill his or her obligations. Leadership should be held by the most deserving person based on biological, psychological, educational, financial, and experiential aspects. However, the patriarchal system that is entrenched in Arab society has given men the privilege of dominating the public, political, and economic spheres. Therefore, there is a mistaken assumption that only men are naturally worthy of being leaders. Wadud rejects this view and emphasizes that the Qur'an does not limit women's opportunities to become leaders if they have adequate abilities and motivation. (Basid & Miskiyah, 2022)

For example, Wadud highlighted the story of Queen Balqis in the Qur'an which shows that women can be wise and independent leaders. The story, according to him, is proof that leadership is not exclusive to men. However,

Wadud also realizes that the implementation of social roles must consider the efficiency and context of the community. In a patriarchal society, changes in the leadership structure must be carried out gradually so as not to cause social dysfunction. The selection of leaders, both male and female, must be based on the capacity and situation faced by the community.

From this interpretation, it appears that Wadud places the relationship between men and women in the framework of social equality, but often his views are considered to emphasize the subordination aspect of women. Criticism of Wadud's interpretation shows that his views tend to view the qawwāmūn verse as a form of oppression against women, thus potentially causing a bias of understanding. If this interpretation is misinterpreted, it can encourage the emergence of negative views on marriage and family relations in Islam, as well as give birth to social phenomena such as the reluctance of women to marry, the increase in statusless relationships, and even the tendency to same-sex relationships in the name of freedom from discrimination. (Siregar, 2017)

In his interpretation of QS. An-Nisa: 34, Wahbah Az-Zuhaili interprets the word قَوَّامُونَ (qawwāmūn) as a form of shighat mubālaghah which shows the emphasis on men's responsibilities in leading, protecting, and caring for women in a way that is justified by the Shari'a. According to him, male leadership is not a form of oppression, but a moral mandate and responsibility accompanied by the obligation to provide a living, educate, and maintain the honor of the family. The meaning of qawāmah in this context is the arrangement of household affairs and guidance based on affection, not domination or absolute power over women. (Amin, 2013)

This asbābun nuzūl verse, as explained by Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, relates to the case of an Ansar woman who was slapped by her husband, Sa'd bin Rabi'. The Prophet PBUH initially decided on the punishment of qishash, but the decision was canceled after the revelation of this verse. This incident shows that the verse is present not to legitimize violence against women, but to affirm men's responsibility in maintaining domestic harmony. Thus, the context of this verse is the establishment of a harmonious and just family social structure, not to privilege one gender over another absolutely. (Maula & Idris, 2025)

According to Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, the leadership of men over women is based on two main factors, namely the factor of creation and the factor of maintenance obligation. In terms of creation, men are generally given physical advantages, emotional stability, and the power of reason to bear public responsibilities such as jihad, imama, and financial management. From a social point of view, men are obliged to provide for themselves, pay dowries, and bear the needs of their families, which is the reason for the shari'i why they are given a leadership role. However, Wahbah emphasized that apart from these responsibilities, men and women have balanced rights and obligations, as explained in the Qur'an. Al-Baqarah: 228: "And for women the rights are proportionate to their obligations properly, and for men one degree of superiority over them."

In his commentary, Wahbah Az-Zuhaili also added aspects of practical fiqh as a moral and legal guideline for Muslim families. He emphasized that the husband has full responsibility in the leadership of the household, but loses this right if he is unable to provide for his wife. In such a condition, the wife has the right to cancel the marriage because the purpose of the marriage is not achieved. The husband has the right to advise his wife, forbid her to leave the house for the sake of the family, and to protect the honor of the family, but must not be tyrannical or rude. Good leadership, according to Wahbah, is one that is carried out with gentleness, responsibility, and the awareness that true power belongs only to Allah SWT. (Quraish, 2002)

Thus, the interpretation of Wahbah Az-Zuhaili does not discredit or oppress women as alleged by Amina Wadud. Instead, his interpretation shows a balance between the authority and moral responsibility of men as well as women's rights guaranteed by the sharia. Wahbah views qawāmah as a functional system that aims to maintain the integrity of the household, not as a form of patriarchal domination. In the tafsir al-Munir, he emphasizes that women have the space to express their opinions, manage their property, and demand their rights as long as they remain within the framework of Islamic values that uphold justice and compassion.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that the concept of gender in feminist interpretation has a significant influence on women's perspectives in interpreting the Qur'an in contemporary times. The feminist interpretation developed by figures such as Amina Wadud, Zaitunah Subhan, and Nasaruddin Umar emphasized the principles of equality and justice between men and women. However, in its development, this concept has undergone a shift in meaning from equality to equal roles between men and women. This view obscures the differences in nature that have been established by Islamic law, and has the potential to lead to a relative understanding of the truth. As a result, the concept of gender is often used to interpret Qur'anic verses subjectively by highlighting criticism of patriarchal culture and the traditional role of men in the family.

On the other hand, feminist interpretations of gender-themed verses such as QS. An-Nisa: 34, QS. An-Nisa: 3, and QS. An-Nisa: 11 has a considerable social impact in Islamic society. Some of the negative impacts that arise include a decrease in women's interest in marriage because they reject male leadership in the household, rejection of the practice of polygamy which is considered a symbol of injustice, and rejection of the distribution of inheritance according to sharia provisions. These impacts show that there is a shift in values in Islamic society that makes modern standards of justice take precedence over the legal provisions of Allah SWT. As a result, there is an imbalance in the family structure and a weakening of the application of Islamic law in social life.

Through a comparative study between feminist interpretations and contemporary interpretations such as Al-Munir by Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, Al-Azhar by Buya Hamka, and Al-Misbah by Quraish Shihab, this study offers a constructive critique of the deviation of the concept of gender. This study is important because it helps Muslims understand that in the Islamic view, men and women have the same position before Allah, but with different roles according to the sharia. This approach restores the understanding of the ummah to a balance between rights and obligations, and prevents the occurrence of moral relativism that can obscure Islamic values. Thus, criticism of the concept of gender in feminist interpretation plays an important role in maintaining the purity of the interpretation of the Qur'an and strengthening the Islamic view of true justice.

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