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## Exposing Patriarchal Bias in the Interpretation of Q.S An-Nisa 1 and 34: A Study of Amina Wadud's Thoughts for Inclusive Islam

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### Abstract

*Verses 1 and 34 of Surah An-Nisa are pivotal Quranic texts frequently referenced in discussions about gender relations. Traditionally, interpretations of these verses have been shaped by patriarchal views, largely due to male dominated scholarly traditions. Amina Wadud, a noted Muslim feminist scholar, introduces a hermeneutic feminist perspective that challenges biased readings disadvantaging women. This study critically examines Wadud's interpretative approach to these verses and assesses her role in fostering a more equitable, contextual, and inclusive understanding of Islamic scripture. Employing a qualitative method based on literature review and descriptive analytical analysis, this research highlights Wadud's emphasis on historical context, social realities, and female experiences in Quranic interpretation. The findings reveal that while Wadud upholds the Quran's authority, she contests traditional readings that restrict women's rights and roles unjustly. Her work expands the discourse on gender equity within Islam and offers valuable insights for progressive Islamic thought, especially relevant in Indonesia's ongoing dialogue on gender equality. This study underlines the necessity of reinterpreting sacred texts through compassionate and context-aware lenses to ensure Islamic principles genuinely promote justice for all, including women.*

**Keywords:** Surah An-Nisa'; Hermeneutic Feminist; Amina Wadud; Gender Interpretation; Patriarcal Exegesis.

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## Introduction

The role of women in Islam remains a dynamic and contested issue within contemporary religious and social scholarship, particularly in relation to Qur'anic interpretations governing gender relations [1]. Among the most frequently cited texts are Surah An-Nisa verses 1 and 34, which address fundamental issues of human origin, marital relations, and social responsibility within Muslim families and societies. Classical interpretations of these verses have largely been shaped by patriarchal perspectives, often positioning women in subordinate roles and restricting their social and religious agency [2]. Such interpretations continue to generate debate among scholars and the broader Muslim public.

The persistence of patriarchal interpretations is not primarily rooted in the Qur'anic text itself, but rather in the socio-historical contexts in which classical exegesis was produced [3]. Most early Qur'anic commentators were male scholars operating within patriarchal social structures, which influenced their interpretive frameworks and reinforced gender hierarchies [4][5]. Consequently, many classical interpretations reflect gender bias that contradicts the Qur'an's broader ethical commitment to justice and human dignity.

In response to these interpretive challenges, Muslim feminist scholars have developed alternative hermeneutical approaches that seek to reread the Qur'an through inclusive and justice-oriented lenses. One of the most influential figures in this movement is Amina Wadud, an American Muslim feminist scholar whose work critically interrogates gender bias in traditional exegesis [6], [7]. Through a feminist hermeneutical approach that integrates textual analysis, historical context, and women's lived experiences, Wadud argues that the Qur'an does not inherently discriminate against women; rather, discriminatory interpretations emerge from androcentric readings that obscure its egalitarian message [2], [8]. Her seminal work *Qur'an and Woman* emphasizes the necessity of rereading sacred texts to restore the Qur'an's ethical vision of justice (*'adl*) and equality (*musawah*).

Previous studies have extensively explored feminist hermeneutics within Islamic thought. Foundational contributions by Wadud (1999), Barlas (2006), and Hassan (1991) collectively argue that patriarchal interpretations are historically constructed rather than textually mandated. Barlas asserts that the Qur'an fundamentally rejects patriarchy, though its message has been distorted by male-dominated interpretive traditions [9]. Hassan further highlights the Qur'anic concept of *nafs wahidah* (a single soul) as theological evidence of ontological gender equality [10]. More recent research has examined the application of feminist hermeneutics in contemporary Muslim societies, including Indonesia,

where scholars have analyzed inclusive Qur'anic interpretations, gender justice activism, and ethical reform in Islamic law [9], [10], [11].

However, despite the growing body of scholarship on Islamic feminist hermeneutics, a significant research gap remains. Most existing studies emphasize theoretical discourse or sociological implications, while relatively few provide focused, text-centered analyses of specific Qur'anic verses that serve as the theological foundation for gender hierarchy particularly Surah An-Nisa verses 1 and 34. This gap is especially evident in the Indonesian academic context, where discussions of gender equality often rely on secondary interpretations rather than direct hermeneutical engagement with the Qur'anic text.

This study seeks to address this gap by critically examining Amina Wadud's interpretation of Surah An-Nisa verses 1 and 34, with particular attention to how her feminist hermeneutical approach deconstructs patriarchal bias in classical exegesis.

Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions:

- a. How does Amina Wadud interpret Surah An-Nisa verses 1 and 34 within the framework of feminist hermeneutics?
- b. In what ways does her interpretation challenge and deconstruct patriarchal bias in classical Qur'anic exegesis?
- c. What are the implications of her interpretation for developing a more inclusive and justice-oriented understanding of gender in Islam, particularly in the Indonesian context?

The purpose of this research is not to challenge the authority of the Qur'an, but to demonstrate that a contextual and inclusive rereading can recover the Qur'an's inherent commitment to justice and gender equity. By offering a detailed textual analysis grounded in feminist hermeneutics, this article positions itself as a contribution to contemporary Qur'anic studies, Islamic education, and gender discourse, especially within the Indonesian context, by promoting an inclusive and justice-oriented understanding of Islam.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative research design with a content analysis and critical hermeneutical approach. The qualitative method is considered appropriate because the focus of this research lies in interpreting textual data, specifically the works of Amina Wadud and selected Qur'anic verses (An-Nisa: 1-34), within their socio-historical and gendered contexts. As a content-based study, the research aims to identify patterns, concepts, and interpretive

frameworks embedded in the primary texts and to critically analyze them using feminist hermeneutics.

## Research Subjects and Data Sources

The subjects of this study are (1) Amina Wadud's interpretive writings, including *Qur'an and Woman*, and (2) Qur'anic verses related to gender hierarchy, particularly Surah An-Nisa 1 and 34. The data sources consist of:

- Primary sources: Amina Wadud's books, Qur'anic verses, and classical tafsir texts relevant to these verses.
- Secondary sources: peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and contemporary studies discussing feminist exegesis and gender interpretation in Islam.

## Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

The main research instrument is the researcher, functioning as a human instrument who selects, interprets, and synthesizes textual data. To support rigor, a text analysis sheet is used to categorize themes such as equality, patriarchy, justice, hermeneutical principles, and contextual interpretation. Data collection techniques include: (1) document analysis, (2) note-taking, (3) coding of textual themes.

## Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis consisting of three stages:

1. **Data Reduction:** selecting relevant textual segments from Wadud's works and scholarly literature.
2. **Data Display:** organizing the data into thematic categories such as creation narrative, gender roles, *qiwāmah*, and hermeneutical method.
3. **Interpretation:** applying feminist hermeneutics to uncover meaning behind the text, examine interpretive assumptions, and critique patriarchal readings in classical exegesis.

This analytical process is complemented by a critical hermeneutical interpretation, which situates the text within its socio-historical context while exploring its ethical and theological implications for contemporary Muslim communities. Through this methodological framework, the study aims to produce a comprehensive and context-sensitive analysis of Amina Wadud's interpretation of gender-related Qur'anic verses.

## Result and Discussion

This section systematically presents the discussion of Amina Wadud's thought by first outlining her intellectual background and major works, followed by an analysis of her interpretation of Surah An-Nisa verses 1 and 34. This structure is intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of how her feminist hermeneutical approach challenges patriarchal bias in classical Qur'anic exegesis.

### Biography of Amina Wadud

Amina Wadud is a Muslim intellectual from the United States who is known as one of the leading figures in the development of discourse on gender equality in Islam. He born on September 25, 1952 in Bethesda, Maryland, to a Christian family A devout Methodist. At the age of 20, he made a big decision in his life by converted to Islam. This decision was not merely a religious conversion, but also became the starting point of his deep spiritual search and commitment to understanding critically examine Islamic teachings, especially from the perspective of women who have been less find space in the interpretation of religious texts [15][16].

After converting to Islam, Wadud intensively studied Islamic sciences, especially in the field of interpretation of the Qur'an, and began to focus his studies on the issue of gender relations in Islamic context[17]. He seeks to present an alternative perspective that is more just and inclusive of women through a hermeneutic approach that emphasizes the importance of historical context, linguistics, and ethics in understanding revelation [18], [19]. One of the events that made his name He became widely known globally when he led Friday prayers for a mixed male congregation. and women in New York in 2005. This action, although considered progressive by some parties, also gave rise to quite widespread controversy among Muslims, especially who have conservative views [20].

However, this bold step further strengthens Amina Wadud's position as a symbol of the struggle against patriarchal domination in religious institutions. Through his works in his work, he emphasized that the principles of justice and equality are at the heart of Islamic teachings, and that women have equal rights in terms of religious interpretation and participation in religious life [11]. His contributions have had a major influence on Islamic studies contemporary, especially in building awareness of the importance of interpreting the Qur'an side with gender justice [21].

Amina Wadud pursued her undergraduate education at the University of Pennsylvania and succeeded earned a Bachelor's degree in Elementary

Education in 1975. After completing After his first level education, he continued his postgraduate studies at the University of Michigan, where he studied Islamic Studies and Arabic until obtaining a Master's and Doctorate degree [22], [23]. During his academic journey, he also gained knowledge at various universities. renowned Islamic educational institutions, including the American University in Cairo and Al Azhar, which is the world's leading center of Islamic scholarship. The combination of Islamic education Western and traditional Islamic training gave Wadud broad and deep insight. about the Qur'an and the science of interpretation. This scientific background is an important foundation in the formation and development of her thoughts on Islamic feminism. Based on strong knowledge in the study of classical and modern Islamic texts, he is able to formulate a critical interpretive approach but still based on Islamic principles. This approach is the basis for his efforts to build a discourse on gender justice. based on a contextual and ethical understanding of the Qur'an [20], [21].

Amina Wadud's intellectual background is heavily influenced by her dual identity as a an African-American woman and convert to Islam who grew up in a social environment that was often colored by discrimination, both in terms of race and gender[24]. Her life experiences This complex forms his awareness of structural inequality which is also reflected in the interpretation of Islamic teachings [25]. He views that various problems faced by Muslim women do not originate directly from the text of the Qur'an the Qur'an, but rather from a way of interpretation that has long been dominated by the perspective of male scholars. who tend to have a patriarchal mindset [21].

The experience of marginalization he experienced prompted him to re-evaluate the tradition of interpretation. The Qur'an with a more inclusive and equitable approach towards women. This is where it comes from began to develop a hermeneutic approach, namely an interpretation method that emphasizes the importance of understanding sacred texts in historical, social and concrete life experience contexts, especially women's experiences. In this way, Wadud attempts to present a reading review of the Qur'an which is not only textual, but also ethical and contextual so that can open up space for upholding the values of gender justice in Islam [26].

This intellectual background plays a significant role in shaping her scholarly works and interpretative approach.

## **Works of Amina Wadud**

The name Amina Wadud is starting to get widespread attention among academics and gender activists. after publishing his work entitled Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective in 1992. The book became a milestone in the development of Islamic feminist discourse,

because it offers a re-reading of the text of the Qur'an from a woman's perspective. Using a hermeneutic approach, Wadud trying to dismantle the patriarchal biases that have colored traditional interpretations against the verses of the Quran [27]. In this work, Wadud firmly rejects the view that states that the Qur'an contains principles that demean or discriminate against women. Instead, he emphasized that the core teachings of the Qur'an is actually full of values of justice and equality, which also include human rights women in various aspects of life. This critical approach aims to returning the Qur'an to its normative essence, namely as a holy book that brings mercy and justice for all humanity, regardless of gender [15].

Then in 2006, Wadud reaffirmed his commitment to the issue of justice. gender through her second work entitled *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam*. In this book, she discusses further the struggle of Muslim women in fights for social justice and reform in the Islamic legal system. The work does not not only theoretical, but also reflects personal experiences and collective movements women in the face of unjust social structures. These two works make Amina Wadud as one of the important pioneers in the contemporary Islamic feminist thought stream [15].

Her major works, particularly *Qur'an and Woman*, provide the foundation for understanding her interpretative approach to specific Qur'anic verses, including Surah An-Nisa verses 1 and 34.

## Interpretation of Surah An-Nisa' verses 1 and 34

### An-Nisa' Verse 1

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ  
مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ

رَقِيبًا

"O mankind! Fear your Lord who created you from a single soul. (Adam), and (Allah) created his wife (Eve) from (himself); and from both of them Allah multiplying many men and women. Fear Allah, In His name you ask one another, and (maintain) the ties of kinship. Indeed, Allah is always watching over you." [28].

The above verse presents the basic elements in the Qur'anic version of the story of human origins, the story generally understood as the creation of Adam and Eve. To help in our understanding, we will look at these three key terms: *min*, *nafs* and *zawj* [2].

Min, in this sentence the use of the word "min" has been interpreted with one or both meanings above. Each interpretation gives different results or understanding, depending on the meaning which of the "min" is chosen by the commentator. For example, in the tafsir of al-Zamakhshari, this verse It is understood that mankind was created from one "nafs" (soul/source of self) which is the origin all human beings, and that the partner (*zawj*) of the "nafs" is taken from it. Al-Zamakhshari also refers to the Biblical version to support his view that the couple extracted (taken literally) from the "nafs" [29]. In addition, other verses such as in the letter Al A'raf 189 and the letter Az-Zum

ar verse 6 state that Allah "*ja'ala*" (makes) a couple from the "nafs". The verb "*ja'ala*" here means "to create something from something else". other", thus strengthening that the word "*min*" (from it) means "extracted from" i.e. derived from physically or substantially from the first [2].

When the word "min" is interpreted as meaning "of the same kind or type", for both its appearance in the verse in question, this interpretation is often based on other verses in the Qur'an which uses a similar formula, namely the plural form of nafs (*anfus*) and *zawj* (*azwaj*), as found in Surah An-Nahl verse 72, Ash-Shura verse 11, and Ar-Rum verse 21. These verses are then interpreted to mean that the pairs (*zawj/ azwaj*) come from the same type or the same essence as humans themselves does not originate physically or literally. However, in English translations, the word "min" in all of these verses remains translated as "from" (dari). This opens up another possibility: that the literal meaning is "taken from" may still be considered valid. However, both the interpretation and the translation remain unconfirmed. clearly explain the meaning of the two most important terms in the verse [2], namely:

- *Nafs*: often interpreted as "self", "soul", or "original entity".
- *Zawj*: partner (but the meaning can be broader: biological partner, sexual partner, or complementary parts).

*Nafs*, in its technical use in the Qur'an, refers to the common origin of all beings. mankind. Although humans later spread throughout the world and were divided into different nations, tribes, languages and skin colors, we all come from one country the same source which is "nafs" which is Tunggal [2].

In the creation story according to the Quran, Allah never intended to begin creation. humans with only one man, even the Qur'an never explicitly mentions it that the origin of mankind began with Adam (the male). Furthermore, the Qur'an does not state that the creation of man began with the *nafs* of Adam (male human) [30]. This is important to note because the version of human creation in the Qur'an is not conveyed with terms or emphasis on gender [2].

*Zawj*, grammatically, *zawj* is a masculine word, so it uses adjectives and verbs which ends in masculine. Conceptually, *zawj* is neither male nor female in the literal sense. special. This word is even used in the Qur'an not only for humans, but also for plants (Ar-Rahman verse 52) and animals (Hud 40) as pairs or groups [2].

The absence of detail in the Qur'an indicates one or more of the following: first, the reader already has enough information about a story that additional details are needed considered unnecessary or even excessive; second, the details are less important for the intended purpose. what the Qur'an wanted to convey at that time; third, the Qur'an refers to something unseen or invisible, which is difficult to explain with limited human language. With considering these things, it can be asserted that the Qur'an provides very little information about the first human couple [2].

### An-Nisa' Verse 34

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ  
 أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۗ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنِتٌ حَفِظَتْ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ  
 فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۗ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ  
 اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

"Men (husbands) are protectors of women (wives), because Allah has made some of them excel in their profession." they (men) over some others (women), and because they (men) have provide for her from her wealth. So the righteous women are those who obey (Allah) and take care of herself when (her husband) is not there, because Allah has taken care of her (them). Women from whom you fear nusyuz, you should give them advise them, leave them in bed (separate beds), and (if necessary) beat them. But if they obey you, then do not look for an excuse to "Trouble him. Indeed, Allah is Most High, Most Great." [28]

This verse does not only discuss the issue of priority or preference. Classically, this verse considered the most important verse that explains the relationship between men and women, namely that "men are the *qawwamun 'ala* women" (the ones responsible or the caretakers) women). However, before discussing this further, it is important to note that this relationship based on two main things: first, the priority or preference given by Allah to some men; secondly, what they spend from their wealth to support themselves women. In other words, it reflects socio-economic norms and ideals in relationships men and women [2]. This verse shows that the responsibility men over women is based on the advantages that Allah has given to some of them. them and their role in

providing sustenance [31]. This reflects a socio-economic rule in which men serves as the protector and supporter of the family, so that the relationship between the two is not merely a matter of individual superiority, but rather is related to the obligation to protect and support both materially and morally.

The translation of the phrase "on the basis of" comes from the word *bi'* in this verse. In the sentence structure In Arabic, *bi'* is used to indicate that what is mentioned before the word depends or is determined by what is mentioned after it. In the context of this verse, this means Men only become *qawwam* (responsible) for women if two conditions are met: First, there are certain advantages or virtues; second, that men provide for women from his property. So, if one of these two conditions is not met, the man cannot referred to as *qawwam* for the woman [2].

Amina Wadud's concern lies in the word "*faddala*" (having prioritized). The verse states that the position between men and women is based on "what" has been Allah is more. If viewed from a material point of view, the only verse in the Qur'an that is explicitly shows that Allah gives more shares to men than to women. women are in terms of inheritance. In this context, the share for men is twice double the share of women (An-Nisa' verse 7) in one family. However, this does not mean that absolutely all males will inherit more than all females. The amount inheritance is very dependent on the amount of wealth of the family itself. So, the advantage of men in this case it is relative, not absolute. In addition, if this verse does refer to the form advantages shown through the inheritance system, then those advantages are also non-renewable absolute or absolute. This relationship is often considered logical because other conditions of *qiwamah* (men's responsibility towards women) is that they provide for women from their property them[32]. Thus, there is a reciprocal relationship between privilege and responsibility: men has an obligation to spend his wealth to support women, and therefore they are given a larger share of the inheritance. This creates a balance between the roles financial and economic rights in the social structure of the family according to the perspective of the Qur'an. However, it cannot be ignored that many men interpret the verse as a form of virtue absolute superiority of men over women. They believe that men were created by God as superior to women. superior to women, especially in terms of physical strength and intelligence. This view make the verse a justification for male domination, without considering that the virtue in the verse is actually contextual and conditional, namely related to with economic responsibility and not absolute intrinsic or natural superiority [2].

The word *faddala* (prioritize) cannot be understood absolutely, because this verse does not states "they (men) are preferred over them (women)" in the plural form which firmly. On the contrary, the verse uses the word *ba'd* (some) of them for *ba'd* (some) others. The use of this word indicates that the excess in

question is of a special nature. relative and contextual, in accordance with diverse human realities. Not all men are better superior to all women in all things; on the other hand, there are women who are superior than some men in certain aspects. So, whatever form of priority is given by God, it is not absolute, but depends on the situation and individual abilities. If what Allah emphasizes in the verse is limited to material aspects (especially regarding inheritance), then the scope and form of this virtue have been explained in the Qur'an. However, even though what is meant is more than just inheritance it may include other things still, according to the wording of the verse itself, this priority is limited to only "some of them" over "some others". This means that men are called *qawwamun* (responsible) for women. in certain cases where Allah gives some men an advantage over others women, and in a context where men provide for them. Thus, it is clear that men as a group cannot be absolutely considered *qawwamun* over all women as a group. The relationship of responsibility is specific and conditional, not absolute and comprehensive [2].

However, to understand this important difference in more depth, a more detailed explanation is needed *qawwamuna 'ala* (قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى) phrase regarding further. What does it actually mean, and how the limits of its application? In terms of meaning, Pickthall translates it as "responsible responsible for" or "lead". Al-Zamakhshari interpreted that men take care of affairs women, while Maududi stated that men are the regulators of women's affairs because Allah has made men superior to women [33]. However, Azizah al-Hibri strongly criticized the translation which gave the impression that men were protector or nurturer of women, because according to him the main meaning of the phrase is moral guidance and care. He also emphasized that the right to self-determination for women remain valid, except in extreme circumstances such as mental disorders. However, Many men misuse this verse to justify absolute authority over women. women, and to claim their inherent superiority and divine decree. (divine ordinance) that men are superior to women. Thus, the meaning *qawwamuna 'ala* should not be understood as a form of domination, but rather as relational responsibility based on caring and contribution, not superiority absolutely [2]

Several important questions arise regarding the limits of the application of this phrase: Are all men Is *qawwamun* applicable to all women? Or does this only apply within the family circle, so that the men in a family are *qawwamun* over the women? Or in fact, is this even narrower, only applicable within the bonds of marriage, where the husband is *qawwamun* over the wife? These three possibilities have been put forward by scholars. In general In general, a scholar who understands that the word *faddala* (excess/virtue) indicates the absolute superiority of men over women, tends not to limit the meaning of *qiwamah*

(leadership or responsibility) in family relationships alone, but extends it to the realm of socially in general. In this understanding, men are positioned as superior beings, while women are considered as dependent and inferior. However, the approach This kind of ignores the complexity of the meaning and editorial context of the verse in the Qur'an. Qur'an. When viewed more critically, there is no need to generalize the role of *qawwamun* to all men over all women, because the wording of the verse itself is conditional and can interpreted more contextually and proportionally [2].

Sayyid Qutb, whose opinion will be discussed in more depth, views the concept of *qiwamah* as an issue related to the family in the context of society. It limits the understanding regarding this verse on the relationship between husband and wife. According to him, the role of men as *qawwamun* for women is based on the obligation of men to provide for and providing material needs for women. In other words, *qiwamah* in his view has a main dimension in the economic aspect, namely men's financial responsibility towards her partner. The reason for limiting this verse to the domestic context is strengthened by the fact that the passage the continuation of the verse discusses issues directly related to husband-wife relationship. In addition, the next verse uses the dual form (*mutsanna*), which further emphasizes that the context is an interaction between two people, namely husband and wife. However, the previous verses actually discuss social relations between men and women. in general [2]

Amina, although acknowledging Sayyid Qutb's limitations of context, still chose to apply this verse to the wider community, not based on assumptions the innate superiority of men over women, and not because God honors men more than women. On the contrary, it expands the functional relations that Qutb conveyed in the household context becomes a larger relationship for the common good between men and women in society [34]. The author's main focus is on the responsibilities women's responsibilities and rights in giving birth and raising children, which are important aspects in social structure and division of roles [2]

Sayyid Qutb stated that men and women are both creations of Allah, and Allah never intended to oppress anyone from His creation. Both are part of from the most important institution in society, namely the family. The family itself begins with marriage between a man and a woman. In this family structure, each members have certain responsibilities. Biologically, women naturally bear the burden the primary responsibility in giving birth to a child. This responsibility is not a trivial matter, it is very important because human survival depends on it. To carry out the task This requires physical strength, endurance, intelligence, and a deep personal commitment. However, if women's responsibilities are so great and crucial, then in fairness, men should also must bear equally important responsibilities for the sake of balance and justice in creation, as well as to prevent

injustice. According to Qutb, that responsibility is *qiwamah*, namely ensuring that women are not burdened with duties additional things that could interfere with or weaken her primary responsibilities as a mother and caregivers of the next generation, a task that cannot be replaced by men. With In other words, *qiwamah* is not a form of domination, but is a system of reciprocal responsibility. for the sake of common well-being and the survival of human life [2].

All these problems cannot be solved if we only look narrowly at verse 34. Therefore, the Qur'an must always be reviewed by taking into account human interaction. and shared responsibilities between men and women. This verse establishes the ideal obligations for men towards women to create a balanced and mutually beneficial society. sharing. This responsibility is not something that is biological or inherently attached, but rather has important values. This attitude of prioritizing responsibility must be built and developed. It is clear that there are many cases where this attitude has not been achieved. However, this attitude of responsibility should not only be limited to *qiwamah* in material matters. alone. More broadly, this responsibility must also include spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. intellectual, and psychological. By understanding *qiwamah* in a comprehensive way like this, men can truly carry out their caliphate on earth, as Allah has commanded to humans since creation. This attitude will eliminate the competitive mindset and hierarchical structure that is actually destructive, not constructive. Men are encouraged to fulfill their mandate them as caliphs on earth especially in their relationship with women, which is traditional child bearers and caregivers. The experience and knowledge that women have The benefits gained from the process of giving birth and caring for children can begin to be understood and experienced by men, starting from how they view and treat women [2].

Building upon this interpretation, the following section critically analyzes how Wadud's approach deconstructs patriarchal bias in classical exegesis.

### **Analysis of Amina Wadud's Thoughts on Patriarchal Bias**

This analysis directly addresses the research objectives by examining how Wadud's feminist hermeneutical framework challenges patriarchal interpretations and offers a more inclusive understanding of gender in Islam.

Amina Wadud's thinking on patriarchal bias stems from her view that gender inequality in Islam stems not from the Quranic text itself, but from the way it is interpreted within a male-dominated tradition[24]. According to Wadud, classical interpretations are built on the experiences, interests, and perspectives of male interpreters, often placing women as passive objects in social and theological constructions[6]. This epistemological dominance creates a patriarchal bias that is passed down from generation to generation, becoming

considered an inherent part of religious teachings [35]. For Wadud, this is the main problem patriarchal readings are accepted as authoritative, while women's experiences are considered irrelevant to the interpretative process.

In verse 1 of Surah An-Nisa, Amina Wadud emphasizes that the Qur'an affirms the origin of humanity from a single *nafs* (a single soul or entity), which contains no division or hierarchy based on gender. The concept of *nafs waḥidah* indicates that from the outset, the Qur'an establishes the principle of ontological equality between men and women, recognizing both as equally created beings with the same dignity and responsibility before God [36]. Consequently, biological differences between men and women cannot be used as a theological basis to justify the superiority of one gender over the other.

Furthermore, the use of the term *zawj* in this verse does not imply subordination but rather denotes a reciprocal and complementary relationship between men and women. According to Wadud's analysis, *zawj* represents a partnership grounded in mutuality and interdependence, rather than a hierarchical structure that privileges one party over the other. The concept of *zawj*, therefore, should be understood as an ethical relationship founded on balance, cooperation, and shared responsibility.

Based on this framework, Wadud critically challenges classical interpretations that claim women were created from men particularly from Adam's rib and are consequently positioned as subordinate. She argues that such interpretations do not arise from the Qur'anic text itself but rather from patriarchal social constructs that later became embedded in exegetical traditions. As a result, the notion of women's subordination is not a Qur'anic doctrine, but a product of androcentric readings that neglect the Qur'an's core commitment to justice and equality. Through her feminist hermeneutical approach, Wadud seeks to restore the ethical and universal message of the verse by reaffirming human equality beyond gender distinctions.

In verse 34, patriarchal bias becomes more evident through the interpretation of the phrase *qawwamuna 'ala*, which has traditionally been translated as male leadership or domination over women. Wadud rejects this interpretation, arguing that *qiwamah* is more accurately understood as a moral and social responsibility rather than an absolute authority [37]. The verse addresses the trust placed upon men to maintain family stability and to fulfill domestic and economic responsibilities within specific social contexts, not as a legitimation to control or restrict women. From this perspective, *qiwamah* is not a "privilege," but an ethical obligation constrained by the principle of justice.

Wadud also critically examines the interpretation of the term *faḍḍala*. Traditionally, this term has been understood as indicating an absolute

superiority of all men over all women. However, the verse employs the expression *ba'duhum 'ala ba'd*, which suggests that such advantage is contextual and contingent upon particular social and economic conditions, especially the responsibility of family provision. This reading reinforces the idea that gender relations in the Qur'an are dynamic, balanced, and responsibility-based, rather than static, hierarchical power relations.

Beyond linguistic analysis, Wadud emphasizes the importance of situating these verses within their historical and social contexts [38]. According to her, patriarchal bias in Qur'anic exegesis emerges when classical interpreters fail to distinguish between their own socio-cultural realities and the normative message of the Qur'an (Barlas, 2006). As a result, the interpretations produced often reflect patriarchal cultural values more than the Qur'an's ethical commitment to justice. Therefore, a critical, contextual, and gender-sensitive rereading becomes essential to recover the moral substance of the verses more clearly.

Furthermore, Wadud develops the concept of *qiwamah* as a responsibility encompassing spiritual, moral, intellectual, and psychological dimensions. This interpretation positions men not as controllers, but as partners tasked with fostering harmonious and non-dominative relationships [39]. In this way, Wadud's understanding of *qiwamah* functions both as a critique and a corrective to patriarchal interpretations that have long been embedded in certain exegetical traditions.

Ultimately, Wadud's thought aims not only to identify patriarchal bias but also to contribute to a more inclusive understanding of Islam. The inclusive Islam she envisions is grounded in the Qur'an's foundational principles of justice, dignity, and moral equality. Therefore, any interpretation that perpetuates gender injustice must be reconsidered. Wadud's hermeneutical framework provides pathways for interpreting gender-related verses in ways that are ethical, contextually sensitive, and relevant for contemporary Muslim societies, including those in Indonesia.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that Wadud's interpretation not only critiques patriarchal bias but also reconstructs a more just and contextually grounded understanding of Qur'anic teachings on gender.

## Conclusion

Amina Wadud is a prominent Muslim feminist scholar who has made significant contributions to gender-oriented Qur'anic interpretation in Islam. As an academic and Qur'anic exegete, she is widely recognized for her influential work *Qur'an and Woman*, which advocates a rereading of the Qur'an through the lens of gender justice. In her analysis of Surah An-Nisa verses 1 and 34, Wadud critiques patriarchal interpretations that she considers inconsistent with the Qur'an's core principles of justice.

In verse 1, Wadud highlights that the Qur'an does not identify a male figure as the first human being. The term *nafs wahidah* (a single soul) indicates a gender-neutral origin of humanity. The absence of gender specification in this verse is not an oversight, but a deliberate theological choice that emphasizes shared humanity over gender distinctions.

In verse 34, Wadud offers a contextual interpretation of the term *qawwamun 'ala*, which has often been understood as legitimizing male superiority. She argues that any form of male privilege mentioned in the verse is conditional, related to the responsibility of providing financial support and certain divinely assigned preferences, rather than rooted in biological or intellectual superiority. According to Wadud, *qiwamah* represents a moral and social responsibility to maintain balance within the family and society, not a mechanism of domination.

Wadud deconstructs the long-standing understanding of *qiwamah* as a manifestation of male authority and proposes that it be understood as a form of support for women's biological and social roles rather than as a means of control. She emphasizes the principles of justice and mutuality in gender relations and rejects the notion of men as absolute leaders. In her view, *qiwamah* is better understood as an ethical responsibility aimed at preserving harmony within the family and society.

Overall, Wadud's thought challenges the dominance of patriarchal interpretations in Islam. She calls for a more just reading of the Qur'an, emphasizing that spiritual, moral, and social responsibilities should be shared equally between men and women. The ethical hermeneutical approach she proposes opens pathways toward a more inclusive, just, and compassionate understanding of Islam, in harmony with the Qur'anic values of mercy, justice, and mutual responsibility.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. First, this research relies on a qualitative library-based approach, focusing on textual and interpretative analysis without incorporating empirical data from lived social

contexts. As a result, the findings remain largely theoretical and may not fully reflect how Wadud's interpretative framework is received or practiced within diverse Muslim communities. Second, this study centers primarily on the thought of Amina Wadud, which, although highly influential, does not encompass the full range of contemporary feminist or reformist interpretations of the Qur'an.

Future research is therefore encouraged to expand this inquiry by incorporating empirical methods, such as field studies, interviews, or ethnographic approaches, to explore how inclusive interpretations are implemented in real-life contexts. Additionally, comparative studies involving other Muslim feminist scholars, such as Asma Barlas or Riffat Hassan, would provide a broader analytical perspective on gender discourse in Islam. Further research could also examine the implications of feminist hermeneutics in Islamic education and legal frameworks, particularly within specific socio-cultural settings such as Indonesia. Such efforts would contribute to strengthening the integration between Qur'anic interpretation, gender justice, and contemporary Islamic thought.

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**Aidil:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Project administration. **Cima Ghoziah:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. **Muhammad Ahasanul Aziz:** Resources, Investigation, Data curation, Writing – review & editing. **Firman Azali:** Resources, Investigation, Validation, Writing – review & editing. **Muhammad Faras Heztio:** Formal analysis, Visualization, Writing – review & editing.

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