

Gender discrimination in Qur'anic interpretation: Challenges and opportunities of inclusive hermeneutics

Aidatul Fitriyah^{1*}, Gohar Rahman²

¹ Universitas Airlangga Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia

² National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, Pakistan

Article Information	Abstract:
Submitted: 2024-09-04 Revised: 2024-11-16 Published: 2024-12-19	Gender discrimination in classical interpretations of the Qur'an persists due to patriarchal bias, while inclusive hermeneutics continues to face conservative resistance despite offering opportunities for justice through feminist reinterpretation. This study aims to analyze gender bias in Qur'anic interpretation, examine structural challenges in developing inclusive interpretations, and explore opportunities for reconstructing egalitarian gender interpretations relevant to contemporary social dynamics. The study employs gender hermeneutics through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method using thematic analysis of classical and contemporary interpretations to identify patriarchal bias and reconstruct gender-inclusive Qur'anic interpretations. The findings reveal three main points: 1) gender bias in the interpretation of QS. 4:34, 4:11, and 4:3 originates from classical patriarchy. Contextual hermeneutics reconstructs the concept of qawwam toward a more inclusive and equitable interpretation of the Qur'an. 2) Inclusive interpretation is hindered by conservative resistance, male-dominated religious institutions, patriarchal legitimization of sharia, and limited female participation in contemporary interpretive reform. 3) Opportunities for reconstructing gender interpretations are supported by global awareness, education, digital technology, changing women's roles, and international collaboration toward contextual interpretation. The study concludes that gender bias in Qur'anic interpretation is rooted in classical patriarchal structures. Although contextual reconstruction faces structural barriers, education, technology, global awareness, and international collaboration provide opportunities for more equitable interpretations. This study contributes to strengthening contextual hermeneutics, encouraging gender reinterpretation, advocating for equitable family law, utilizing digital media, and increasing women's participation in religious authority and Qur'anic interpretation.
Keywords: Gender Interpretation; Equality; Reconstruction of Interpretation.	



Copyright: © The author(s) 2024

This is an open access article under the terms and conditions [of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

To cite this article (APA Style):

Fitriyah, A., & Rahman, G. (2024). Gender discrimination in Qur'anic interpretation: Challenges and opportunities of inclusive hermeneutics. *An-Nisa' Journal of Gender Studies*, 17(2), 105–120. <https://doi.org/10.35719/annisa.v17i2.303>

*Corresponding author: Aidatul Fitriyah, English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Airlangga Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia e-mail: aidatul.fitriyah-2020@fib.unair.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Historically, the interpretation of the Qur'an has reinforced patriarchal norms due to the dominance of male scholars in religious authority (Siddiqui-Dennis, 2021; Carrasco-Santos et al., 2024; Rahmaniah & Taufik, 2024). Classical exegetical authorities such as Al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, and Al-Qurtubi frequently assigned greater authority to men, particularly in interpreting QS. An-Nisa: 34 on *qiwamah*, which has been used to justify male dominance within the family structure (Shomad, 2022; Begum et al., 2024). Such interpretations have significantly influenced the spiritual, social, and political dimensions of Muslim societies (Cook, 2000). However, recent decades have witnessed the emergence of new hermeneutical approaches advanced by scholars such as Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, and Fazlur Rahman, who advocate for more equitable and inclusive interpretations of the Qur'an. Their approaches emphasize equality between men and women in social and spiritual responsibilities (Syarani, 2017; Crabtree, 2022). Consequently, this study highlights the potential of inclusive Qur'anic interpretation to reduce gender discrimination and promote greater equality within contemporary Muslim societies.

Based on a review of previous studies, research on gender bias in Qur'anic interpretation can be classified into three major streams. First, gender bias in Qur'anic interpretation is rooted in the dominance of masculine classical exegesis, which often perpetuates the subordinate position of women, particularly in interpretations of verses related to leadership and authority (Muttaqin, 2015; Wadud, 2021; Darzi et al., 2021). Second, the limited representation of women in Qur'anic interpretation and gender inequality in education hinder the realization of equality in Muslim-majority societies (Sabah et al., 2023; Firdayanti et al., 2023; Anastasia et al., 2024). Third, inclusive-contextual approaches, educational technology, and international collaboration are considered capable of reducing gender bias in Qur'anic interpretation (Kharomen, 2018; Supriatna et al., 2023; Deroncele-Acosta et al., 2024). However, previous studies have not comprehensively integrated the patriarchal roots of Qur'anic interpretation, the structural barriers to reform, and the opportunities for inclusive hermeneutical interpretation. This study offers novelty through the reconstruction of contextual hermeneutics toward a more inclusive gender-based interpretation of the Qur'an.

This study aims to analyze the roots of gender bias in Qur'anic interpretation shaped by classical patriarchal constructions, examine the structural challenges in developing inclusive interpretations, and explore opportunities for reconstructing gender interpretation through contextual approaches in order to promote a more just, egalitarian, and socially relevant understanding of the Qur'an. Three main research questions are addressed: (1) How do gender bias and discrimination appear in the interpretation of QS. 4:34, 4:11, and 4:3? (2) What are the challenges in realizing an inclusive interpretation of the Qur'an? (3) What opportunities exist for reconstructing gender interpretation in the modern era? The contribution of this study lies in providing a theoretical framework for contextual hermeneutics, as well as a strategic roadmap for integrating theological, political, and technological dimensions in contemporary gender interpretation reform.

This study is grounded in the argument that gender bias in Qur'anic interpretation is not a theological defect, but rather a historical product of patriarchal structures that shaped classical interpretive methods. Verses such as QS. 4:34, 4:11, and 4:3 are not intrinsically discriminatory; however, they have been interpreted within hierarchical frameworks reproduced through male dominance in religious institutions and the legitimization of conservative sharia law. Therefore, the reform of gender interpretation cannot rely solely on textual reinterpretation, but must also dismantle the structural and institutional barriers that perpetuate inequality. At the same time, the synergy between global awareness, changing

women's roles, education, digital technology, and international collaboration creates historical opportunities for reconstructing more equitable interpretations. This study emphasizes that the transformation of gender interpretation requires simultaneous engagement within theological, political, and technological spheres.

METHOD

Research Approach

This study employs gender hermeneutics to analyze sacred texts and uncover hidden biases within traditional interpretations (Hasan et al., 2022; Giang & Dan, 2024). A feminist hermeneutical approach enables the reinterpretation of Qur'anic verses from a more egalitarian perspective by considering the social and historical contexts in which the verses were revealed. Consequently, interpretation is no longer solely dependent on the views of classical scholars, which often reflect patriarchal perspectives, but instead opens space for more contextual and justice-oriented readings. The primary objective of this approach is to provide a comprehensive understanding of various forms of gender bias in traditional exegesis while offering alternative interpretations that are more equitable and inclusive (Llorens et al., 2021; Nemani et al., 2024).

Data Sources

The data sources of this study consist of secondary data collected through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method (Salama et al., 2017; Mengist et al., 2020), referring to classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegesis literature as well as scholarly studies on gender in the Qur'an, including the works of Wadud (1999) and Barlas (2002). The keywords used in the search process included "feminist," "Qur'anic interpretation," "patriarchy," "Islamic law," and "gender discrimination." Literature searches were conducted through various academic databases. The SLR data collection process was carried out systematically (Carrera-Rivera et al., 2022; Rocco et al., 2023), including source identification, selection based on relevance and publication quality, and thematic classification, such as comparisons between classical and contemporary interpretations or patriarchal bias within sacred texts.

Data Analysis

The collected literature was analyzed in depth through critical reading to understand the context and major themes of gender bias in Qur'anic interpretation. This process began with a careful examination of each text to capture the nuances of the authors' arguments regarding gender issues. Subsequently, thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes, including patriarchal bias in classical exegesis, forms of gender discrimination produced through interpretation, and various contemporary feminist interpretive approaches (Liehr-Storm et al., 2023; Naeem et al., 2023). This thematic analysis enabled the researchers to identify patterns and general tendencies in Qur'anic interpretation directly related to issues of gender inequality and injustice.

Critical Evaluation and Reconstruction

The critical evaluation stage compared patriarchal classical interpretations with more inclusive contemporary interpretations, using the perspectives of Wadud (1999) and Barlas (2002) as the primary theoretical foundations. This comparison was conducted systematically on key verses such as QS. An-Nisa: 34, 4:11, and 4:3. Ultimately, the analysis reached a stage of reconstructing more equitable interpretations by proposing alternative arguments for verses that have often been perceived as degrading toward women. This reconstruction offers concrete solutions through a feminist hermeneutical approach aimed at promoting gender justice within Islam.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Unraveling gender bias in the interpretation of Qur'anic texts

Qur'anic interpretation has often been influenced by deeply rooted patriarchal bias, resulting in discriminatory interpretations toward women and perpetuating social inequality. Muslim feminists such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas have challenged this paradigm through contextual hermeneutics grounded in justice and aligned with the egalitarian principles of Islam. Their works demonstrate that inclusive and gender-equitable interpretations are both possible and essential for a contemporary understanding of Islamic teachings.

Table 1

Gender Bias in Interpretation of the Qur'an

No	Findings	Description (Including Verses)	Implications
1	Patriarchal Dominance in Traditional Interpretation	Classical exegeses such as <i>Tafsir al-Jalalayn</i> and <i>Tafsir Ibn Kathir</i> interpret Q.S. An-Nisa: 34 (<i>al-rijālu qawwāmūna 'ala al-nisā'</i>) as legitimizing male leadership and authority over women. This interpretation was shaped by the patriarchal social structure of the classical period (Masoud et al., 2016).	Demonstrates that traditional interpretations may reproduce gender hierarchies, thereby requiring a critical approach to the social context of interpretation.
2	Reformulation of Interpretation by Muslim Feminists	Amina Wadud (1999) and Asma Barlas (2002) reinterpret Q.S. An-Nisa: 34 by emphasizing that the term <i>qawwam</i> refers to responsibility and support rather than domination. They also highlight Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 13 as the foundation of human equality.	Provides a foundation for egalitarian interpretations that affirm gender equality in Qur'anic readings.
3	Contextual Hermeneutics toward Gender Verses	Nasr Abu Zayd (2018) emphasizes contextual readings of verses such as Q.S. An-Nisa: 3 (polygamy) and Q.S. An-Nisa: 34 by considering the social context of seventh-century Arabia to avoid gender bias in interpretation.	Encourages historical-contextual interpretations of the Qur'an to reduce gender bias in Islamic law and exegesis.
4	Social Construction in Gender Interpretation	Hyder (2008) and Takim (2009) argue that dominant interpretations of Q.S. An-Nisa: 11 (inheritance) are influenced by patriarchal social structures rather than universal textual meanings.	Serves as a basis for criticizing Islamic family law interpretations that tend to be gender-biased and non-neutral.

Source: Compiled by the researchers, 2024.

Table 1 demonstrates that gender bias in Qur'anic interpretation appears consistently across classical, reformist, and contextual exegeses. Traditional interpretations tend to position men as the primary authority, particularly in Q.S. An-Nisa: 34 and Q.S. An-Nisa: 11. In contrast, Muslim feminist scholars propose more egalitarian reinterpretations by emphasizing the meaning of responsibility rather than domination. Contextual hermeneutical approaches further highlight the importance of understanding Qur'anic verses within their historical contexts in order to reduce gender bias. Overall, gender interpretation reflects a shift from hierarchical readings toward more equitable and contextual interpretations in contemporary Islamic studies.

Based on the findings, three major tendencies emerge in gender interpretations of the Qur'an. First, classical exegesis reproduces patriarchal structures by interpreting verses such as Q.S. An-Nisa: 34 and Q.S. An-Nisa: 11 within a framework of gender hierarchy. Second, Muslim feminist approaches advanced by Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas shift the meaning

toward egalitarianism by emphasizing that the term *qawwam* signifies ethical responsibility rather than male superiority. Third, the contextual hermeneutics of Nasr Abu Zayd, as well as the studies of Hyder and Takim, demonstrate that the meanings of Qur'anic verses are shaped by socio-historical contexts, indicating that gender bias originates not from the text itself but from the interpretive process. These findings suggest that gender interpretation is dynamic, contextual, and open to critical reconstruction.

Forms of gender discrimination in Qur'an interpretation

Qur'anic interpretation is often trapped within deeply rooted patriarchal structures. Certain verses are used to justify male dominance over women. The cultural and social norms of the Abbasid era significantly influenced the exegetes, resulting in interpretations that reinforce gender inequality. Literal approaches frequently neglect the broader historical context. Therefore, a more inclusive and contextual approach is required to render Qur'anic interpretation more just and aligned with continuously evolving social dynamics.

Table 2
Forms of Gender Discrimination

No	Findings	Description (Including Verses)	Implications
1	Patriarchal Structure in Qur'anic Interpretation	Historical patriarchal structures have influenced Qur'anic interpretation, particularly Q.S. An-Nisa: 34 (<i>al-rijālu qawwāmūna 'ala al-nisā'</i>), which is frequently interpreted as legitimizing male leadership and dominance over women (Mir-Hosseini, 2015; Noor, 2024).	Demonstrates that interpretations of sacred texts may reproduce gender inequality, thereby requiring a critical equality-based approach.
2	Influence of Social and Cultural Norms	Gender interpretation is shaped by dominant cultural and social norms, including interpretations of Q.S. An-Nisa: 11 (inheritance) and Q.S. An-Nisa: 34, which reflect social ideologies positioning men as superior (Ahmed, 1992; Ayubi, 2020; Saffari, 2024).	Indicates that gender bias in interpretation originates from social constructions rather than from the text itself.
3	Literal Interpretive Approaches	Literal approaches have been criticized for failing to capture the Qur'an's dimension of justice, particularly in verses such as Q.S. An-Nisa: 3 (polygamy) and Q.S. An-Nisa: 34, due to their neglect of historical and social contexts (Zayd et al., 2006; Hillman & Baydoun, 2020).	Highlights the necessity of contextual hermeneutics to avoid reductionist meanings and gender bias.
4	Traditional Resistance toward Inclusive Interpretation	Contextual and inclusive approaches are often rejected by traditional groups who perceive reinterpretations of verses such as Q.S. An-Nisa: 34 as threats to established interpretive authority (Wadud, 1999; Sachedina, 2009).	Obstructs the development of more inclusive gender interpretations and reinforces interpretive conservatism.
5	Risk of Fragmentation in Interpretive Meaning	The flexibility of historical-sociological interpretation may produce diverse meanings of verses such as Q.S. An-Nisa: 34, potentially leading to sharp differences among groups (Rahman, 1982).	May result in fragmentation within the Muslim community if not balanced with a strong methodological framework.

Source: Compiled by the researchers, 2024

Table 2 demonstrates that forms of gender discrimination in Qur'anic interpretation emerge through patriarchal structures, socio-cultural norms, literal interpretive approaches, traditional resistance, and the risk of fragmented meanings. Verses such as Q.S. An-Nisa: 34, Q.S. An-Nisa: 11, and Q.S. An-Nisa: 3 frequently become the focus of gender-biased interpretations due to the influence of non-neutral social contexts. Overall, gender

discrimination in Qur'anic exegesis originates not only from the text itself, but also from historically and ideologically constructed interpretive processes. Therefore, a more critical and inclusive contextual hermeneutical approach is required in contemporary Qur'anic studies.

Based on the findings, gender discrimination in Qur'anic interpretation is constructed through five major mechanisms. First, historical patriarchal structures shape hierarchical readings of Q.S. An-Nisa: 34, positioning men as leaders over women. Second, social and cultural norms reinforce gender bias in interpretations of inheritance verses and family relations. Third, literal interpretive approaches neglect historical context, thereby narrowing the Qur'anic concept of justice. Fourth, resistance emerges from traditional groups toward inclusive approaches perceived as threatening established interpretive authority. Fifth, the flexibility of historical-sociological interpretation may generate fragmentation of meaning. These findings confirm that gender discrimination in Qur'anic exegesis originates not solely from the text itself, but from the complex interaction between text, social context, and the evolving ideologies of interpreters within contemporary Islamic discourse.

Challenges in realizing inclusive interpretation

This study reveals several significant barriers to inclusive Qur'anic interpretation. Conservative groups often resist changes related to gender issues, perceiving them as threats to established religious traditions. In countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, sharia law has been used to legitimize patriarchal and gender-biased interpretations. Male dominance within religious institutions further perpetuates gender bias while limiting women's participation in interpretive authority. Moreover, deeply rooted socio-political barriers substantially hinder women's contributions to theological discourse in both substantive and meaningful ways.

Table 3

Challenges in Inclusive Interpretation

No	Findings	Description	Implications
1	Resistance from Conservative Groups	Conservative groups reject inclusive interpretations on the grounds of preserving the purity of Islam. They perceive reinterpretations, particularly those related to gender issues, as deviations from established religious teachings (Wahid, 2006; Omari, 2016).	Hinders the development of inclusive interpretations and reinforces the dominance of traditional exegesis within religious discourse.
2	The Use of Sharia Law to Legitimize Patriarchal Interpretations	In several countries, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, sharia law has been utilized to support patriarchal interpretations that restrict women's rights in various aspects of life (Mir-Hosseini, 2015; Khalishah & Rosyid, 2023).	Demonstrates that the institutionalization of law can systematically reinforce gender inequality.
3	Barriers to Inclusive Family Law Reform	Efforts to reform family law toward more inclusive frameworks are frequently obstructed by conservative groups that employ sharia to preserve patriarchal social structures (Badran, 1995; Maslim & Bjorck, 2009).	Restricts the modernization of Islamic family law in ways that are more responsive to gender equality.
4	Male Dominance in Religious Institutions	Male dominance within religious institutions contributes to gender-biased interpretations. The limited participation of women constrains the development of more inclusive and egalitarian approaches (Wadud, 1999; Fauziyah & Farisi, 2024).	Reduces women's representation in the production of religious knowledge and reinforces interpretive bias.

5	Social and Political Barriers to Women's Participation	Women involved in religious interpretation often encounter significant social and political barriers, including gender discrimination across various Muslim societies (Ahmed, 1992).	Limits women's access to scholarly authority and weakens women's voices within interpretive discourse.
---	--	--	--

Source: Compiled by the researchers, 2024.

Table 3 demonstrates that the challenges in realizing inclusive Qur'anic interpretation are primarily associated with resistance from conservative groups, the use of sharia law to legitimize patriarchal interpretations, barriers to family law reform, male dominance within religious institutions, and the limited participation of women. Collectively, these factors reinforce the persistence of gender-biased interpretations and hinder the development of more egalitarian exegesis. In many contexts, particularly within certain Muslim-majority countries, social and institutional structures continue to support unequal readings of the text. Therefore, the primary challenges are not merely theological, but also political, social, and institutional within contemporary gender interpretive discourse.

Based on the data, the barriers to gender-inclusive Qur'anic interpretation are not merely theological but also structural and institutional. Conservative resistance creates normative legitimacy that reinforces the dominance of traditional interpretations. Islamic law and family law reforms are employed as instruments to perpetuate systemic inequality, rather than being solely derived from the sacred text. The limited participation of women in religious institutions restricts the production of equitable knowledge. Furthermore, socio-political barriers to women's participation increasingly weaken critical voices within the interpretive discourse. Collectively, these five barriers form a cycle of resistance that is difficult to penetrate without structural change and enhanced women's access to scholarly authority.

Opportunities for reconstructing gender interpretation

Opportunities for the reconstruction of gender-inclusive Qur'anic interpretation in the modern era are increasingly expanding, driven by the strengthening global awareness of equality, the rising participation of women in public and religious spheres, and the integration of gender perspectives into educational curricula. Digital technology accelerates the dissemination of inclusive discourse, while international collaboration reinforces the academic legitimacy of movements toward a more just and contextual interpretation.

Table 4
Opportunities for Reconstructing Gender Interpretation

No	Findings	Description	Implications
1	Increasing Awareness of Gender Equality	The growing global and domestic awareness of gender equality has encouraged the re-evaluation of Qur'anic interpretations that have historically positioned women in subordinate roles. Contextual hermeneutical approaches (Wadud, 1999) are employed to reinterpret gender-related verses within their historical and social contexts.	Encourages the reconstruction of more equitable, contextual, and gender-inclusive interpretations in contemporary Islamic studies.
2	Changing Roles of Women in Muslim Societies	Women are becoming increasingly active in public and political spheres across various Muslim societies (Mir-Hosseini, 2015), including the emergence of female religious scholars such as KUPI in Indonesia, which advocates inclusive and gender-responsive interpretations.	Expands women's participation in religious authority and strengthens the legitimacy of egalitarian interpretations.

3	The Role of Education in Reconstructing Interpretation	Educational institutions such as Indonesian Islamic universities (UIN) and Al-Azhar University in Egypt have begun integrating gender-based Qur'anic interpretation studies into their curricula, while NGOs such as Sisters in Islam contribute through public education initiatives (Mahmood, 2005).	Produces a generation of scholars and communities that are more critical and open toward inclusive interpretations.
4	The Role of Digital Technology in Disseminating Inclusive Interpretation	Digital media, including social media, blogs, and platforms such as Musawah, accelerate the dissemination of more progressive gender interpretations and rapidly connect global communities.	Expands access to inclusive interpretive discourse and accelerates the transformation of religious thought.
5	International Collaboration in Interpretive Studies	International conferences, joint publications, and forums such as the OIC, along with webinars hosted by global universities such as Oxford and Georgetown, strengthen the exchange of ideas regarding more equitable gender interpretation (Sardar et al., 2019).	Strengthens the global movement for gender equality in Islam through cross-national academic collaboration.

Source: Compiled by the researchers, 2024.

Table 4 demonstrates that the reconstruction of gender interpretation in Islam in the modern era is supported by various social, educational, and technological opportunities. The increasing global awareness of gender equality has encouraged the re-evaluation of Qur'anic interpretations that were previously patriarchal in nature. The changing roles of women in Muslim societies, including their involvement in public and religious spheres, further strengthen the legitimacy of inclusive interpretations. In addition, educational institutions, digital technology, and international collaboration expand access to and dissemination of more progressive gender interpretations. Overall, these opportunities create transformative spaces for interpretations that are more equitable, contextual, and responsive to contemporary social dynamics.

Based on the findings, several opportunities collectively form a mutually reinforcing ecosystem for the reconstruction of gender interpretation. Awareness of gender equality serves as the ideological foundation driving transformation across social, educational, and technological spheres. Changes in women's roles are not only quantitative but also qualitative, marked by the emergence of legitimate female religious authorities. Formal and non-formal education function as agents for the systematic and sustainable reproduction of inclusive discourse. Digital technology acts as an accelerator for the dissemination of ideas while simultaneously connecting communities across previously restricted geographical boundaries. International collaboration provides global political and academic support that strengthens the legitimacy of inclusive interpretive movements at the local level. The synergy of these opportunities creates a historical momentum for the transformation of more equitable gender interpretations.

Discussion

A study on gender bias in the Qur'an reveals three key points. First, gender bias in the interpretation of QS. 4:34 and 4:11, as well as discrimination in QS. 4:3, is rooted in classical patriarchy. Muslim feminists reconstruct qawwam as an ethical responsibility, and contextual hermeneutics is required to deconstruct Qur'anic meanings toward a more inclusive and just interpretation. Second, the challenges to inclusive interpretation include conservative resistance, male-dominated institutions, patriarchal legitimation of Islamic law, and low female participation, all of which structurally reinforce gender bias and hinder contemporary

Qur'anic exegesis reform. Third, opportunities for reconstructing gender-inclusive interpretation are supported by global awareness, changing gender roles, education, digital technology, and international collaboration, which together create space for transformation toward a more just and contextual interpretation. Thus, classical interpretive bias, structural challenges, and modern opportunities demonstrate that gender exegesis reform requires simultaneous theological, political, and technological efforts.

In the contemporary social context, issues of gender equality have become increasingly prominent within the global Muslim community, alongside the growing awareness of women's rights and social justice (Karimullah, 2023; Bonner, 2024). In various Muslim-majority countries, women have actively participated in public and political spheres, as reflected in Indonesia through the Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia (KUPI), which advocates gender-responsive interpretations of Islamic texts (Mir-Hosseini, 2015). Nevertheless, conservative resistance remains strong, particularly in countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, where interpretations of sharia law are frequently employed to restrict women's rights (Donahoe, 2017; Mir-Hosseini, 2018). Socio-political barriers to women's participation in religious discourse also continue to be substantial (Uyuni et al., 2023). Amid the currents of globalization and digital transformation, Muslim societies are confronted with an urgent need to reassess discriminatory interpretations in order to align them with contemporary principles of justice and equality (Zaharin & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2020).

Gender bias in the interpretation of verses such as QS. 4:34, 4:11, and 4:3 is rooted in classical patriarchal readings, thus necessitating contextual hermeneutics to reconstruct the meaning of qawwam as ethical responsibility (Webb, 2000; Tasmin, 2021). Theoretically, these findings reinforce the contextual hermeneutics developed by Zayd (2018), namely that Qur'anic reading must consider the 7th-century Arab social context to avoid gender-biased legal generalizations. Amina Wadud (1999) and Barlas (2002) reinterpret the term qawwam in QS. An-Nisa: 34 not as male domination but as responsibility and support within just family relations. They also refer to QS. Al-Hujurat: 13 as the foundation of human equality. Barlas (2002) employs deconstructive hermeneutics to demonstrate that the Qur'an does not endorse gender hierarchy but rather teaches justice (Rahemtulla, 2023; Kunnummal, 2023). Meanwhile, Sands (2003) and Fahdzlan et al. (2023) prove that the dominant interpretation of the inheritance verse (QS. An-Nisa: 11) emerged from patriarchal social structures, not from universal textual meaning.

This study provides the understanding that Qur'anic interpretation is dynamic and never value-neutral; it is always influenced by the social context, politics, and power of the interpreter (Mernissi, 1991; Koburtay et al., 2023). Therefore, intellectual humility is required to acknowledge that classical exegesis is not absolute truth but rather a historical product subject to revision (Wadud, 1999), especially given that patriarchal bias has become embedded in key verses such as QS. 4:34 and 4:11. The active participation of women in the production of religious knowledge is key to dismantling patriarchal bias, as women's experiences provide new perspectives that have long been marginalized (Gurung, 2020; Lwamba et al., 2022). This study also teaches that change at the discursive level alone is insufficient; it must be accompanied by structural reform within religious, educational, and legal institutions (Esack, 1996; Geissinger, 2015), given the challenges posed by conservative resistance and male dominance in religious institutions. Patience and cross-community dialogue constitute essential strategies so that the transformation of Qur'anic interpretation can proceed without triggering social fragmentation (Sachedina, 2009).

Compared to previous studies, this research reinforces the findings of Masoud et al. (2016) that classical exegeses such as al-Jalalayn and Ibn Kathir reproduce gender hierarchy.

However, this study goes further by identifying structural and institutional barriers including conservative resistance, patriarchal legitimization of Islamic law, and low female participation that collectively reinforce gender bias (Wadud, 1999; Anwar et al., 2024), as well as socio-political obstacles to women's participation (Mir-Hosseini, 2018). Meanwhile, the studies by Hyder (2008) and Takim (2009) focused solely on inheritance verses, whereas this research extends the analysis to leadership (An-Nisa: 34) and polygamy (An-Nisa: 3). In contrast to reformist approaches such as Badran (1995), which emphasize legal advocacy, this study highlights the role of digital technology and global collaboration as accelerating opportunities for equality discourse (Gil Guerrero, 2024; Sardar et al., 2019). The scholarly position of this research lies at the intersection of traditional exegesis critique and progressive reconstruction grounded in contextualism.

Based on the finding that opportunities for reconstructing gender-inclusive Qur'anic interpretation are supported by global awareness, changing gender roles, education, digital technology, and international collaboration, the following concrete recommendations for action can be proposed. First, reform religious education curricula at universities by integrating gender-inclusive exegesis perspectives and contextual hermeneutics. Second, create substantive spaces for women's participation in Qur'anic interpretation councils, religious deliberations, and decision-making processes within religious institutions. Third, encourage governments in Muslim-majority countries to revise discriminatory sharia-based family laws by referring to the principles of justice and public interest (*maqashid*). Fourth, utilize digital platforms and social media for public campaigns on the importance of gender-equal Qur'anic interpretation, as well as organize cross-national webinars and workshops. Fifth, facilitate structured dialogue between conservative and progressive scholars to find common ground within the framework of just *maqashid al-shariah*.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that gender bias in the interpretation of the Qur'an is not merely the result of individual misinterpretation, but rather a systemic product of classical patriarchal structures embedded within key verses such as Q.S. 4:34, 4:11, and 4:3. Reconstruction efforts undertaken by Muslim feminist scholars through contextual readings and the reinterpretation of *qawwam* as an ethical responsibility demonstrate that sacred texts can, in fact, be interpreted in a more equitable manner. Nevertheless, structural challenges including conservative resistance, male dominance within religious institutions, the legitimization of patriarchal interpretations of sharia, and the limited collective participation of women continue to hinder reform efforts. At the same time, global awareness, shifting gender roles, educational advancement, digital technology, and international collaboration provide significant opportunities for transformation. Therefore, the reform of gender-related Qur'anic interpretation requires simultaneous theological, political, and technological struggles.

This study contributes to strengthening contextual hermeneutics by demonstrating that socio-historical readings of gender-related Qur'anic verses are capable of deconstructing patriarchal biases that have long been regarded as absolute. This approach provides an alternative framework for contemporary Qur'anic interpretation studies that is no longer confined to narrow literalism. Practically, this research offers a roadmap for gender equality advocates within Muslim societies by integrating three interconnected dimensions: theological (reinterpretation of Qur'anic verses), political (advocacy for equitable family law policies), and technological (the utilization of digital media to disseminate inclusive discourses). Furthermore, the findings regarding the importance of women's participation in religious authority serve as a foundation for educational and religious institutions to design

capacity-building programs aimed at empowering women as Qur'anic interpreters and decision-makers.

This study has several limitations. First, the scope of the analyzed Qur'anic verses is limited to Q.S. 4:34, 4:11, and 4:3; therefore, it does not yet encompass other potentially gender-biased verses, such as those related to testimony or public leadership. Second, the methodological approach is primarily qualitative and hermeneutic, and thus does not measure the empirical impact of inclusive interpretations on changes in societal attitudes. Future research directions may include: (a) cross-national comparative studies on the effectiveness of gender-oriented tafsir education in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and universities; (b) quantitative research examining the influence of exposure to inclusive digital interpretations on the attitudes of young Muslim generations; and (c) the development of structured dialogue models between conservative and progressive scholars that can be experimentally implemented within communities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With sincere respect and appreciation, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to our colleagues and lecturers for their continuous support and the opportunities provided, which have enabled the publication of this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Aidatul Fitriyah: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Methodology; Writing Original Draft; Writing Review & Editing. **Gohar Rahman:** Formal Analysis; Data Curation; Validation; Visualization; Writing Original Draft.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, L. (1992). *Women and gender in Islam: Historical roots of a modern debate*. Yale University Press. <https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:002048317>
- Anastasia, A., Nurhuda, A., Aziz, T., & Ansori, I. H. (2024). Gender equality in the perspective of Islam and education in Indonesia. *Jurnal Armada Pendidikan*, 2(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.60041/jap.v2i1.53>
- Anwar, A. K., Ghianovan, J., & Shofa, I. K. (2024). Understanding the concept of gender in Qur'anic interpretation: A feminist study of the thought of M. Quraish Shihab. *Jurnal Semiotika: Kajian Ilmu al-Quran dan Tafsir*, 4(1). <http://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/jsq>
- Ayubi, Z. (2020). De-universalising male normativity: Feminist methodologies for studying masculinity in premodern Islamic ethics texts. *Journal of Islamic Ethics*, 4(1–2), 66–97. <https://doi.org/10.1163/24685542-12340044>
- Badran, M. (1994). *Feminists, Islam, and nation: Gender and the making of modern Egypt*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400821433>
- Barlas, A. (2002). *Believing women in Islam: Unreading patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an*. University of Texas Press. <https://archive.org/details/believingwomenin0000barl/page/n1/mode/2up>
- Begum, M. S. I., Ismail, I., Yaakob, Z., Razick, A. S., & Abdullah, M. M. A. (2024). Gender equity in Muslim family law: Modern and contemporary 'ulamā's view. *Al-Ahkam*, 34(2), 221–256. <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2024.34.2.20773>
- Bonner, A. (Ed.). (2024). *Social determinants of health in Europe*. Policy Press. <https://doi.org/10.51952/9781447373308>

- Carrasco-Santos, M. J., Seyfi, S., Hosseini, S., Hall, C. M., Mohajer, B., Almeida-García, F., & Cortes Macías, R. (2024). Breaking boundaries: Exploring gendered challenges and advancing equality for Iranian women careers in tourism. *Tourism Management*, 103, 104913. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2024.104913>
- Carrera-Rivera, A., Ochoa, W., Larrinaga, F., & Lasa, G. (2022). How to conduct a systematic literature review: A quick guide for computer science research. *MethodsX*, 9, 101895. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mex.2022.101895>
- Cook, M. (2000). Preliminaries. In *The Koran: A very short introduction* (pp. xx–xx). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780192853448.003.0001>
- Crabtree, S. A. (2022). Islamic principles, inclusivity and revitalisation in conceptual frameworks for Western social work. In H. Schmid & A. Sheikhzadegan (Eds.), *Exploring Islamic social work* (Muslims in Global Societies Series, Vol. 9, pp. xx–xx). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95880-0_15
- Darzi, G., Ahmadvand, A., & Nushi, M. (2021). Revealing gender discourses in the Qur'ān: An integrative, dynamic and complex approach. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 77(4), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6228>
- Deroncele-Acosta, A., & Ellis, A. (2024). Overcoming challenges and promoting positive education in inclusive schools: A multi-country study. *Education Sciences*, 14(11), 1169. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14111169>
- Donahoe, A. (2017). Gender, religion, and international relations. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of international studies*. Oxford University Press. <https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-75>
- Esack, F. (1996). *Qur'an, liberation & pluralism: Islamic perspective of interreligious solidarity against oppression*. Oneworld Publications. https://archive.org/details/quran-liberation-pluralism-by-farid-esack_202401
- Fahdzlan, M. S., Ginting, M. R., & Avandi, B. (2023). Integration of social concepts in the interpretation of the Qur'an: A study of the relationship between the social and the spiritual. *Al-Mujaddid: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Agama*, 5(1), 70–89. <https://doi.org/10.51482/almujaddid.v5i1.116>
- Fauziyah, N. L., & Farisi, T. al. (2024). Women and religion: A gender perspective in religious practice. *JIM: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Pendidikan Sejarah*, 9(2), 665–670. <https://doi.org/10.24815/jimps.v9i2.30670>
- Firdayanti, N., Mustofa, T. A., & Khair, N. S. H. (2023). Gender equality in the perspective of the Qur'an. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Islamic and Muhammadiyah Studies (ICIMS 2023)* (pp. 142–148). Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-102-9_13
- Geissinger, A. (2015). *Gender and Muslim constructions of exegetical authority*. Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004294448>
- Giang, N., & Dan, T. (2024). An analysis of feminist criticism and description of the portrayal of women in the multi-level and traditional society in the selected work *A Rose for Emily* by William Faulkner. *European Journal of Literary Studies*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejls.v5i2.522>
- Gil Guerrero, J. (2024). The Protestant Reformation as an Islamisation of Christianity in the thought of Ziya Gökalp and Ali Shariati. *Religions*, 15(7), 850. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070850>

- Gurung, L. (2020). Feminist standpoint theory: Conceptualization and utility. *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 14, 106–115. <https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v14i0.27357>
- Hasan, H., Jahar, A., Umar, N., & Abdullah, I. (2022). Polygamy: Uncovering the effect of patriarchal ideology on gender-biased interpretation. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 78(4), Article 7970. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7970>
- Hillman, J. R., & Baydoun, E. (2020). Review of the roles of governments and universities and their interrelationships: An urgent need for governance reform in the Arab world. In *Higher education in the Arab world government and governance* (pp. 1–20). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-58153-4_1
- Hyder, S. A. (2008). *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian memory*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195373028.001.0001>
- Karimullah, S. S. (2023). The role of Islamic education in promoting women's empowerment. *Jurnal Tarbiyatuna: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan, Pemikiran Dan Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam*, 4(2), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.30739/tarbiyatuna.v4i2.2568>
- Khalishah, N., & Rosyid, M. F. (2023). Feminism and gender equality in Islam perspective of Al-Qur'an tafsir (Study of Qur'anic verses on term *nafs wahidah*). In *Proceeding: The 6th International Conference on Islamic Studies 2023* (pp. 377–387). <https://proceeding.uingusdur.ac.id/index.php/icis/article/view/1466>
- Kharomen, A. I. (2018). Bias awal penciptaan perempuan dalam tafsir Alquran (Perspektif pendekatan tekstual dan kontekstual). *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis*, 2(2), 187–204. <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v2i2.392>
- Koburtay, T., Abuhussein, T., & Sidani, Y. M. (2023). Women leadership, culture, and Islam: Female voices from Jordan. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 183, 347–363. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05041-0>
- Kunnummal, A. (2023). The politics of post-essential Islamic liberation theology: The difference and intersection between Farid Esack and Hamid Dabashi. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 36(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3027/2023/v36n1a3>
- Liehr-Storm, K. I., Reiss, L. K., Guenther, E. A., Clar-Novak, M., & Muhr, S. L. (2023). Unconscious bias in the HRM literature: Towards a critical-reflexive approach. *Human Resource Management Review*, 33(3), Article 100969. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2023.100969>
- Llorens, A., Tzovara, A., Bellier, L., Bhaya-Grossman, I., Bidet-Caulet, A., Chang, W. K., Cross, Z. R., Dominguez-Faus, R., Flinker, A., Fonken, Y., Gorenstein, M. A., Holdgraf, C., Hoy, C. W., Ivanova, M. V., Jimenez, R. T., Jun, S., Kam, J. W. Y., Kidd, C., Marcelle, E., Marciano, D., ... Dronkers, N. F. (2021). Gender bias in academia: A lifetime problem that needs solutions. *Neuron*, 109(13), 2047–2074. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2021.06.002>
- Lwamba, E., Shisler, S., Ridlehoover, W., Kupfer, M., Tshabalala, N., Nduku, P., Langer, L., Grant, S., Sonnenfeld, A., Anda, D., Eysers, J., & Snilstveit, B. (2022). Strengthening women's empowerment and gender equality in fragile contexts towards peaceful and inclusive societies: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 18(1), Article e1214. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1214>
- Mahmood, S. (2005). *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Princeton University Press. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb04721.0001.001>

- Maslim, A. A., & Bjorck, J. P. (2009). Reasons for conversion to Islam among women in the United States. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 1(2), 97–111. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015735>
- Masoud, T., Jamal, A., & Nugent, E. (2016). Using the Qur'ān to empower Arab women? Theory and experimental evidence from Egypt. *Comparative Political Studies*, 49(12), 1555–1598. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414015626452>
- Mengist, W., Soromessa, T., & Legese, G. (2020). Method for conducting systematic literature review and meta-analysis for environmental science research. *MethodsX*, 7, Article 100777. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mex.2019.100777>
- Mernissi, F. (1991). *The veil and the male elite: A feminist interpretation of women's rights in Islam*. Perseus Books.
- Mir-Hosseini, Z. (2015). Muslim legal tradition and the challenge of gender equality. In *Men in charge? Rethinking authority in Muslim legal tradition*. <https://arabic.musawah.org/sites/default/files/MICchapter1ZMHsummary.pdf>
- Mir-Hosseini, Z. (2018). Justice and equality and Muslim family laws: New ideas, new prospects. In *Sharia and justice* (pp. 73–104). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110574593-005>
- Muttaqin, F. (2015). Feminist interpretation of the Qur'an as an ideological critique against patriarchy (An Indonesian context). *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya*, 17(1), 29–36. <https://doi.org/10.14203/jmb.v17i1.119>
- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). A step-by-step process of thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>
- Nemani, P., Joel, Y. D., Vijay, P., & Liza, F. F. (2024). Gender bias in transformers: A comprehensive review of detection and mitigation strategies. *Natural Language Processing Journal*, 6, Article 100047. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nlp.2023.100047>
- Noor, M. F. (2024). A feminist interpretation of Qur'anic texts by Amina Wadud and Zaitunah Subhan. *INTIHA: Islamic Education Journal*, 1(3), 144–156. <https://doi.org/10.58988/intiha.v1i3.311>
- Omari, R. el. (2016). *The theology of Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī al-Ka'bī (d. 319/931)*. Brill.
- Rahemtulla, S. (2023). The future of Islamic liberation theology. *Religions*, 14(9), Article 1079. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14091079>
- Rahman, F. (1982). *Islam & modernity: Transformation of an intellectual tradition*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Rahmaniah, S., & Taufik, E. (2024). Our husband and children are not acknowledged: Endogamy, gendered power, and child issues in the 'Alawiyyīn marriage in Indonesia. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 18(2), 374–402. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2024.18.2.374-402>
- Rocco, T. S., Plakhotnik, M. S., McGill, C. M., Huyler, D., & Collins, J. C. (2023). Conducting and writing a structured literature review in human resource development. *Human Resource Development Review*, 22(1), 104–125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15344843221141515>
- Sabah, B., Hani Shaari, A., & Aladdin, A. (2023). Headlines and hegemony: Unraveling ideological narratives in Arab and Western media's portrayal of Arab women. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 23(4), 82–94. <https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v23i4.315>
- Sachedina, A. A. (2009). *Islam and the challenge of human rights*. Oxford University Press.

- Saffari, S. (2024). Political Islam and emancipatory politics: Snapshots of Islamic liberation theology. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 25(1), 52–69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2024.2310280>
- Salama, M., Bahsoon, R., & Bencomo, N. (2017). Managing trade-offs in self-adaptive software architectures: A systematic mapping study. In I. Mistrik, N. Ali, R. Kazman, J. Grundy, & B. Schmerl (Eds.), *Managing trade-offs in adaptable software architectures* (pp. 249–297). Morgan Kaufmann. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-802855-1.00011-3>
- Sands, K. Z. (2003). Review of believing women in Islam: Unreading patriarchal interpretations of the *Qur'an* by Asma Barlas. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35(4), 635–636. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743803220262>
- Sardar, Z., Serra, J., & Jordan, S. (2019). *Muslim societies in postnormal times: Foresight for trends, emerging issues and scenarios*. International Institute of Islamic Thought. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv10kmcpb>
- Shomad, A. (2022). Otoritas laki-laki dan perempuan: Studi penafsiran kontekstual Abdullah Saeed terhadap QS. an-Nisa 4:34. *Alif Lam: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities*, 3(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.51700/aliflam.v3i1.432>
- Siddiqui-Dennis, A. (2021). *Pushing against patriarchy: Indonesian Muslim women using Islam as a form of resistance* (Undergraduate honors thesis, Seattle University). Seattle University ScholarWorks. <https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/wgst-theses/4>
- Supriatna, A., Amun, A., Mahardhika, B., Wahyudi, O., & Lenggana, W. F. (2023). Analysis of the use of Instagram social media in increasing the positive image of PT Maharupa Gatra. *Formosa Journal of Sustainable Research*, 2(11), 2793–2802. <https://doi.org/10.55927/fjsr.v2i11.6935>
- Sya'rani, A. (2017). A hermeneutic reading of Qur'anic exegesis. *SUHUF*, 9(2), 193–214. <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v9i2.155>
- Takim, L. (2009). Review of reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory by Syed Akbar Hyder. *American Journal of Islam and Society*, 26(3), 138–141. <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v26i3.1384>
- Tasmin, T. (2021). *Lost in translation: South Asian Muslim women's interpretation of religious gender role expectations, women's agency, and women's identity* (Doctoral dissertation, Illinois State University). <https://doi.org/10.30707/ETD2021.20210719070603184443.23>
- Uyuni, B., Arief, K. M., & Adnan, M. (2023). Contribution of woman ulama in the digital era. *International Journal of Emerging Issues in Islamic Studies*, 3(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.31098/ijeiis.v3i1.1239>
- Wadud, A. (1999). *Qur'an and woman: Rereading the sacred text from a woman's perspective*. Oxford University Press.
- Wadud, A. (2021). Reflections on Islamic feminist exegesis of the Qur'an. *Religions*, 12(7), Article 497. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070497>
- Wahid, A. (2006). *Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam kita: Agama, masyarakat, negara demokrasi*. The Wahid Institute.
- Webb, G. (2000). Review of Qur'an and woman: *Rereading the sacred text from a woman's perspective* by Amina Wadud. *Journal of Law and Religion*, 15(1/2), 519–523. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1051560>
- Zaharin, A. A. M., & Pallotta-Chiarolli, M. (2020). Countering Islamic conservatism on being transgender: Clarifying Tantawi's and Khomeini's fatwas from the progressive Muslim

standpoint. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 21(3), 235–241.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2020.1778238>

Zayd, N. H. A. (2006). *Reformation of Islamic thought: A critical historical analysis*. Amsterdam University Press.

Zayd, N. H. A. (2018). *Critique of religious discourse: Naqd al-khitab al-dini*. Yale University Press.