

Reinterpreting *qiwāmah* in Qur'an 4:34: Integrating critical hermeneutics and *maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* for gender justice

Ihya' Ulumudin^{1*}, Aswadi², Abu Bakar², Faiqotul Mala¹, Moch. Mahsun¹, Raihan Nasir³

¹ Universitas Islam Syarifuddin, Lumajang, East Jawa, Indonesia

² Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, East Jawa, Indonesia

³ Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

Article Information	Abstract:
Submitted: 2026-03-25 Revised: 2026-05-23 Published: 2026-07-13	This study examines the interpretation of QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34, particularly the concept of <i>qiwāmah</i> , and its implications for gender relations in Muslim societies. It seeks to address the tension between classical hierarchical interpretations and contemporary reformist interpretations oriented toward gender justice. Using a qualitative approach, this study integrates comparative exegetical analysis, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's critical hermeneutics, and Jasser Auda's framework of <i>maqāṣid al-sharī'ah</i> . The analysis focuses on <i>Tafsīr Ibn Kathir</i> and <i>Tafsīr al-Manār</i> as representations of classical and reformist exegetical paradigms. The findings reveal a significant transformation in the interpretation of <i>qiwāmah</i> , from male authority and hierarchical leadership toward ethical responsibility and relational accountability. Similar shifts are also found in the reinterpretation of <i>nushūz</i> and <i>ḍaraba</i> , reflecting a stronger emphasis on justice, human dignity, and the prevention of harm. The hermeneutical analysis shows that both interpretations are shaped by their respective socio-historical contexts, while the <i>maqāṣid</i> -based evaluation indicates that neither paradigm fully satisfies the demands of contemporary gender justice. Based on these findings, this study reconstructs <i>qiwāmah</i> as an ethical-relational responsibility grounded in justice, human dignity, mutual accountability, and non-violence. The originality of this study lies in integrating comparative exegetical analysis, critical hermeneutics, and <i>maqāṣid</i> -based evaluation into a unified framework for reinterpreting <i>qiwāmah</i> and advancing gender justice in contemporary Islamic thought.

Keywords:

Qiwāmah; Gender Justice;
Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah;
Qur'anic Hermeneutics.



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To cite this article (APA Style):

Ulumudin, I., Aswadi, A., Bakar, A., Mala, F., Mahsun, M., & Nasir, R. (2026). Reinterpreting *qiwāmah* in Qur'an 4:34: Integrating critical hermeneutics and *maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* for gender justice. *An-Nisa' Journal of Gender Studies*, 19(1), 79-94. <https://doi.org/10.35719/an-nisa.v19i1.465>

*Corresponding author: Ihya' Ulumudin, Islamic Religious Education Study Program, Faculty of Education, Universitas Islam Syarifuddin, Lumajang, East Java, Indonesia e-mail: ihyaulumudin84@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The interpretation of *qiwāmah* in QS. An-Nisa (4:34) remains central to contemporary Islamic gender discourse because classical traditions, particularly *Tafsīr Ibn Kathir* (Kathir, 1998), define it as hierarchical male authority, raising critical concerns about gender justice and human rights (Ahmad & Rasheed, 2018; Ghafournia, 2017). This issue is significant because such interpretations shape social norms, family relations, and persistent gender inequality (Bussolo et al., 2024; Ghaderi et al., 2023; McGill, 2013), and may also perpetuate gender-based violence through the legitimization of male control and disciplinary practices (Sharifnia et al., 2025). Exegetically, Ibn Kathir's classical interpretation and the reformist interpretation of *Tafsīr al-Manār* differ fundamentally: the former emphasizes male superiority and financial provision, whereas the latter stresses contextual and ethical responsibility (Ridha, 1990). Abu Zayd's critical hermeneutics and Jasser Auda's *maqāṣid* framework (Auda, 2008) offer tools for evaluating interpretation through justice, dignity, and harm prevention (Mostfa, 2024). Therefore, *qiwāmah* should be reconstructed as an ethical-relational responsibility grounded in justice, dignity, mutual accountability, and non-violence.

Previous studies on *qiwāmah*, gender relations, and justice in Islam can generally be mapped into three main streams. First, gender-sensitive reinterpretations of the concept of *qiwāmah* and related terms such as *nushūz* and *ḍaraba*, which emphasize alternative readings that challenge patriarchal understandings of the verse (Ghafournia, 2017; Dao-Sabah, 2023; Nelli et al., 2024; Tasbih et al., 2024). Second, the use of critical hermeneutics, particularly the thought of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, to demonstrate the contextual and historical nature of Qur'anic interpretation (Akbar, 2021; Moch, 2022; Mufid et al., 2023). Third, the application of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and Islamic legal reform perspectives to examine contemporary issues such as gender justice, domestic violence, the protection of women's rights, and Islamic family law (Juliansyahzen, 2022; Muhsin et al., 2021; Nuroniyah et al., 2025; Al-Rashidi, 2026; Sezgin, 2025). However, previous studies have not integrated comparative exegetical analysis, Abu Zayd's critical hermeneutics, and Jasser Auda's *maqāṣid* system in reading QS. 4:34. The novelty of this study lies in its comparative analysis of *Tafsīr Ibn Kathir* and *Tafsīr al-Manār*, which is subsequently examined hermeneutically and evaluated through *maqāṣid* to reconstruct *qiwāmah* as an ethical-relational concept grounded in gender justice.

This study aims to analyze the interpretation of *qiwāmah* in *Tafsīr Ibn Kathir* and *Tafsīr al-Manār*, examine their differences through Abu Zayd's critical hermeneutics and the *maqāṣid* framework, and reconstruct *qiwāmah* as an ethical-relational concept that supports gender justice. Four research questions are formulated: (1) How is *qiwāmah* interpreted in the two exegeses? (2) How does Abu Zayd's hermeneutics explain their differences? (3) To what extent do the two interpretations align with *maqāṣid* principles, namely justice, dignity, and non-violence? and (4) How can *qiwāmah* be reconstructed as an ethical-relational concept? The theoretical contribution of this study lies in integrating Abu Zayd's hermeneutics, Auda's *maqāṣid* system, and comparative analysis to reconstruct an ethical-relational model. Its practical contribution is the provision of a normative framework for responding to gender inequality, domestic violence, and Muslim family relations, while remaining grounded in the Islamic intellectual tradition.

This study argues that *qiwāmah* can be reconstructed as an ethical-relational responsibility grounded in justice, dignity, and non-violence, moving beyond classical hierarchical understanding and reformist functional interpretation. This claim is based on the premise that the interpretation of *qiwāmah* is not fixed but constitutes a dynamic

construction shaped by different socio-historical contexts and epistemological assumptions, as reflected in the fundamental differences between Tafsīr Ibn Kathir, which is literal and hierarchical, and Tafsīr al-Manār, which is contextual and responsibility-oriented. To substantiate this argument, this study integrates comparative exegetical analysis, Abu Zayd's critical hermeneutics to uncover socio-historical factors, and Auda's *maqāṣid*-based evaluation focusing on justice, dignity, and prevention of harm. The evaluation shows that both models still have limitations in fulfilling contemporary gender justice. The contribution is theoretical by offering an ethical-relational model of *qiwāmah*, and practical by providing a normative framework for addressing gender inequality, domestic violence, and inclusive religious education.

METHODS

Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative research design based on library research (Snyder, 2019) to examine the reinterpretation of *qiwāmah* in QS. An-Nisa (4):34. It integrates comparative exegetical analysis, critical hermeneutics, and *maqāṣid*-based evaluation within a unified analytical framework. This approach is considered appropriate because the study focuses on the interpretation of religious texts and the construction of meaning across various exegetical traditions (Hanafi et al., 2022). The study compares classical and reformist interpretations of QS. 4:34, analyzes their socio-historical foundations through Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's hermeneutics, and evaluates their ethical implications using Jasser Auda's *maqāṣid* systems approach. Through this integrated design, the study seeks to reconstruct *qiwāmah* as an ethical and relational concept that supports gender justice.

Data Sources

The primary data sources for this research are QS. An-Nisa (4):34 and its interpretations in classical and modern tafsir works, with special attention to Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm and Tafsīr al-Manār. Tafsīr Ibn Kathir represents the classical paradigm based on transmitted reports (riwāyah) and traditional theology (Kathir, 1998), while Tafsīr al-Manār, associated with Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha, reflects the modern reformist trend that incorporates context, reason, and ethics (Ridha, 1990). These two ideologically contrasting works provide a basis for systematic comparison between hierarchical and relational paradigms of gender. Secondary data consist of critical theoretical works shaping the analysis, including Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's hermeneutics emphasizing the socio-historical dimension of interpretation (Zayd, 2006), and Jasser Auda's systems approach to *maqāṣid*, which is adopted for its multidimensional, contextual, and dynamic orientation theoretically compatible with Abu Zayd's critical hermeneutics.

Integrated Analytical Framework

This study employs an integrated analytical framework consisting of three sequential and interconnected stages: comparative exegetical analysis, hermeneutical critique, and *maqāṣid*-based evaluation (Said et al., 2025). These three stages do not function as separate methods but constitute a unified analytical process for reconstructing the concept of *qiwāmah* in QS. An-Nisa (4):34. The first stage identifies and compares the interpretations of *qiwāmah*, *nushūz*, and *ḍaraba* in Tafsīr Ibn Kathir and Tafsīr al-Manār. The second stage applies Abu Zayd's critical hermeneutics to examine how socio-historical contexts, intellectual traditions, and epistemological assumptions shape the production of meaning in each exegesis (Doagoo, 2025). The third stage evaluates these interpretations through Auda's *maqāṣid* framework, particularly the principles of justice (*'adl*), human dignity (*hifẓ al-*

'ird), and the prevention of harm (*dar' al-mafāsid*). The integration of these three stages enables the formulation of an ethical and relational reconstruction of *qiwāmah*.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis was conducted through four sequential stages. First, interpretations of Qur'an 4:34 were extracted from Tafsīr Ibn Kathir and Tafsīr al-Manār, with particular attention to the concepts of *qiwāmah*, *nushūz*, and *ḍaraba*. Second, these interpretations were systematically compared using five analytical dimensions: concept of *qiwāmah*, basis of authority, role of women, nature of leadership, and flexibility of gender roles. Third, the identified differences were examined through Abu Zayd's hermeneutical framework to uncover the socio-historical and epistemological factors influencing each interpretation. Fourth, the resulting interpretations were evaluated through Auda's maqāṣid framework using three normative indicators: justice (*'adl*), human dignity (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*), and prevention of harm (*dar' al-mafāsid*). The findings from these stages formed the basis for reconstructing *qiwāmah* as an ethical and relational concept for gender justice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The interpretation of Q. 4:34 and classical *Qiwāmah* as a stacked authority

In his interpretation of QS. An-Nisa (4:34), Ibn Kathir (Kathir, 1998) formulates *qiwāmah* as a hierarchical form of authority that positions men in the primary role and women in a secondary one. Men are granted the authority to lead, regulate, and discipline their wives, thereby establishing a vertical power relation within the family. Consequently, men are constructed as active primary actors, whereas women are positioned as subordinate and passive subjects in obedience. This construction rests on two interrelated views, particularly the belief that rationality, physical strength, and the responsibility to seek livelihood outside the home and bring income back to the family are divinely endowed attributes inherent in men. Based on these divine criteria, Ibn Kathir legitimizes such a gender hierarchy.

This type of analysis represents nascent Islamic literary criticism that attempts to denaturalize and deconstruct the genderization of hierarchy in religious discourses, where multiple authorities of religion and economy intersect in Islamic texts (Supriyadi et al., 2019). Structuralism on gender advocating harmonization of religious and social systems reinforces female obedience (*qānitāt*) and enforces these social constructs. In contrast, Rashid Ridha in Tafsir al-Manar interprets *qiwāmah* as social responsibility rather than domination, understanding it as social leadership (*riyāsah*) characterized by custodial supervision while preserving women's social agency. *Qiwāmah* is considered necessary for every social unit and socially assigned to men due to their economic role, yet this justification is not absolute. Ridha explicitly acknowledges that women may surpass men in knowledge, ability, and competence, allowing flexibility in gender roles (Ridha, 1990). This reformulation aligns with contemporary scholarship identifying Tafsir al-Manar as part of a broader reformist trend reinterpreting Qur'anic teachings considering modern ethical and social contexts (Amer, 2025; Samir & Saged, 2024), where *qiwāmah* is increasingly understood as ethical responsibility rather than unquestioned authority.

Table 1

Comparative Interpretations of Qiwāmah in Classical and Reformist Tafsir

Aspect	Ibn Kathir (Classical Tafsīr)	Tafsīr al-Manar (Rashid Ridha)
Concept of Qiwāmah	Hierarchical authority positioning men as leaders and women as subordinates.	Ethical and social responsibility emphasizing stewardship (<i>riyāsah</i>) rather than domination.

Basis of Authority	Based on men's rationality, physical strength, and financial responsibility (<i>nafaqah</i>).	Based on social and economic responsibility rather than inherent male superiority.
Role of Women	Women are expected to obey (<i>qānitāt</i>) and occupy subordinate roles.	Women retain agency and may surpass men in knowledge and competence.
Nature of Leadership	Vertical, authoritative, and disciplinary leadership.	Relational, supervisory, and custodial leadership emphasizing guidance and responsibility.
Flexibility of Gender Roles	Fixed roles based on essential male characteristics.	Flexible roles determined by competence and social context.

Source: Compiled by the authors, 2026.

Table 1 demonstrates a clear shift in the interpretation of *qiwāmah*, from hierarchical authority to ethical responsibility. In *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, *qiwāmah* is understood as male authority grounded in rational capacity, physical strength, and financial responsibility. This interpretation consequently positions women in a subordinate role within a vertical and relatively fixed leadership structure. By contrast, *Tafsīr al-Manār* conceptualizes *qiwāmah* as a social and ethical responsibility that emphasizes the function of care-oriented leadership (*riyāsah*), acknowledges women's agency and competence, and adopts a more flexible understanding of gender roles in response to changing social contexts, although male leadership remains its normative framework. These differences indicate that the transformation in the meaning of *qiwāmah* occurs not merely at the conceptual level but also reflects an epistemological shift from an interpretation centred on hierarchical structures of authority to one that is more contextual, relational, and ethically oriented.

Semantic transformation of *qiwāmah*, *nushūz*, and *ḍaraba* toward relational ethics

Ibn Kathīr's classical understanding of *nushūz* focuses on a wife's disobedience toward her husband within the framework of *qiwāmah* authority. This interpretation reinforces gender hierarchy and regards *nushūz* as a trigger for disrupting marital balance (Kathir, 1998). By contrast, Ridha's *Tafsīr al-Manār* offers a more complex paradigm by emphasizing that concern over *nushūz* is intended to prevent the breakdown of the husband–wife relationship. The revealed text is thus directed more toward prevention and the ethics of balance than merely toward the act of *nushūz* itself (Ridha, 1990). Furthermore, *nushūz* is understood not only as disobedience but also as a shift in relational balance. This view aligns with contemporary approaches that foreground contextualization and relationality in Islamic gender discourse (Anggraini & Sukmono, 2024).

The understanding of *ḍaraba* constitutes one of the most significant points of difference. In the tradition of *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, *ḍaraba* is understood as a form of physical discipline permitted in Islam (Kathir, 1998). This definition functions as a boundary within that tradition. Within this framework, physical punishment reflects a process of Islamic (re)disciplining, in which state and religious authority are interrelated. By contrast, in *Tafsīr al-Manār*, *ḍaraba* is regarded as part of a lower normative tradition. Rather than merely grounding *ḍaraba* textually, Ridha also emphasizes that all forms of violence and unjust conduct are fundamentally contrary to Islamic ethics. In this tradition, the selective citation of the Qur'an to rationalize unethical actions is viewed as a contradiction of Islamic ethics.

Table 2

Semantic Transformation of Key Terms in Q. 4:34

Concept	Classical Meaning	Reformist Meaning	Ethical Shift
Qiwāmah	Hierarchical authority	Ethical and social responsibility	Hierarchy → Responsibility

Nushūz	Marital disobedience	Relational disruption and marital imbalance	Control → Relational harmony
Ḍaraba	Permissible physical discipline	Restricted and ethically constrained measure	Violence → Non-violence

Source: Compiled by the authors, 2026.

Table 2 demonstrates a consistent semantic transformation of the key concepts in QS. An-Nisa (4):34, reflecting a shift toward a more ethical interpretation. In classical exegesis, *qiwāmah*, *nushūz*, and *ḍaraba* are understood within a hierarchical and disciplinary framework that emphasizes authority, obedience, and physical discipline. In contrast, the reformist interpretation redefines these concepts by emphasizing ethical responsibility, relational harmony, and restrictions on physical coercion. These semantic changes indicate a broader movement from hierarchy to responsibility, from control to relational harmony, and from violence to non-violence. Collectively, these findings suggest that the reinterpretation of QS. An-Nisa (4):34 extends beyond lexical change toward an ethical reorientation of gender relations. However, the persistence of normative assumptions regarding male leadership indicates that further ethical reconstruction of *qiwāmah*, *nushūz*, and *ḍaraba* remains necessary.

Hermeneutics, social context, and the transformation of Qiwāmah

Another important finding concerns the role of social context in determining the dominant interpretation. In Ibn Kathir's *Tafsīr*, *qiwāmah* is portrayed as absolute and unchangeable, rooted in a social context understood as divinely ordained. Gender roles and divisions are viewed as fixed and absolute, leaving no room for change or variation (Kathir, 1998). By contrast, *Tafsīr al-Manār* adopts a contextual scope, in which gender roles and divisions are understood as responses to variations in social, economic, and functional conditions. Abduh argues that these roles are not absolute and that individual variation must be taken into consideration (Ridha, 1990). This mode of interpretation aligns with contemporary discourse on the impact of social restructuring and modernity, in which family roles in Islam are understood not only hierarchically but also as moving toward cooperation and partnership among family members (Zumrotun et al., 2026).

Furthermore, the hermeneutical analysis shows that the difference between Ibn Kathir and *Tafsīr al-Manār* is not merely textual but also epistemological. Following Abu Zayd's framework, meaning is understood as the result of interaction among the text, context, and interpreter. Ibn Kathir's interpretation reflects the socio-political and intellectual conditions of the medieval Islamic period, in which hierarchical authority was generally accepted without question (Akbar, 2019). By contrast, *Tafsīr al-Manār* emerged within a reformist context shaped by modern concerns with education, social reform, and rational inquiry (Samir & Saged, 2024). Therefore, the shift from authority to responsibility in the interpretation of *qiwāmah* reflects a transformation in the context of interpretation, rather than merely a change in textual meaning. This finding indicates that *qiwāmah* should not be understood as a fixed and universal concept, but rather as a dynamic construction whose meaning continues to be shaped by historical and social realities.

Table 3

Hermeneutics, Social Context, and the Transformation of Qiwāmah

Focus	Aspect	Ibn Kathir (Classical Tafsīr)	Tafsīr al-Manār (Reformist Tafsīr)
Hermeneutics	Interpretation	Literal and text-centered interpretation emphasizing fixed meaning and hierarchical	Contextual interpretation integrating text, context, and interpreter, allowing dynamic meaning.

		authority.	
	Epistemology	Meaning derived primarily from textual authority and classical tradition.	Meaning reconstructed through historical, social, and rational engagement.
Social Context	Historical Context	Reflects the hierarchical socio-political order of the medieval Islamic period.	Emerges from modern reformist concerns with education, social reform, and rationality.
	Gender Roles	Fixed and divinely ordained roles.	Contextual and responsive to changing social and functional conditions.
Transformation of <i>Qiwāmah</i>	Concept	Universal and fixed male authority.	Ethical and contextual responsibility (<i>custodial supervision</i>).
	Implication	Reinforces hierarchical family relations.	Promotes partnership, shared responsibility, and adaptability.

Source: Compiled by the authors, 2026.

Table 3 shows a shift in the meaning of *qiwāmah* from Ibn Kathir's classical exegesis to the reformist interpretation of *Tafsir al-Manār*. Within the hermeneutical framework, Ibn Kathir tends to adopt a literal approach centered on textual authority, so that *qiwāmah* is understood as a stable hierarchical decree. By contrast, *Tafsir al-Manār* places the text in dialogue with historical context, social realities, and modern rationality, thereby rendering the meaning of *qiwāmah* more dynamic. Differences in social context also shape gender construction: classical exegesis reflects the patriarchal order of the medieval period, whereas reformist exegesis responds to the needs of education, social reform, and changing women's roles. Thus, *qiwāmah* undergoes a transformation from universal and fixed male authority into an ethical-contextual responsibility that opens space for partnership, adaptability, and shared family responsibility.

Maqāṣid-based evaluation of *Qiwāmah*

To assess the ethical implications of these two interpretive models, the study's findings are evaluated using Jasser Auda's framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. This evaluation focuses on three normative dimensions that are highly relevant to gender justice, namely justice (*'adl*), human dignity (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*), and the prevention of harm (*dar' al-mafāsid*). These three dimensions provide a basis for assessing the extent to which classical and reformist interpretations of *qiwāmah* align with the primary objectives of Islamic law.

Table 4

*Comparative Maqāṣid Evaluation of *Qiwāmah* in Ibn Kathir and *Tafsir al-Manar**

Maqāṣid Principle	Ibn Kathir	Al-Manar	Assessment
Justice (<i>'adl</i>)	Hierarchical authority	Functional leadership	Partial alignment
Human Dignity (<i>ḥifẓ al-'ird</i>)	Conditional dignity	Recognized dignity	Needs expansion
Prevention of Harm (<i>dar' al-mafāsid</i>)	Permits disciplinary measures	Restricts violence	Incomplete protection

Source: Compiled by the authors, 2026.

Table 4 demonstrates that, from a *maqāṣid*-based evaluation, neither Ibn Kathir nor *Tafsir al-Manār* fully satisfies the principles of justice (*'adl*), human dignity (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*), and the prevention of harm (*dar' al-mafāsid*). Ibn Kathir's hierarchical understanding of *qiwāmah* remains closely associated with unequal authority, conditional recognition of women's dignity, and the acceptance of disciplinary measures. By contrast, *Tafsir al-Manār* shows greater compatibility with *maqāṣid* through its emphasis on functional leadership, recognition of human dignity, and restrictions on violence, although it still retains elements

of normative male leadership. These findings indicate that both interpretations remain limited in fully realizing contemporary gender justice and therefore support the need to reconstruct *qiwamah* beyond both the classical and reformist paradigms.

The *maqāṣid*-based assessment reveals different degrees of compatibility between the two interpretations. Ibn Kathir's hierarchical model faces significant challenges in gender justice, human dignity, and harm prevention (*ḍarar*) within the household. By contrast, Rashid Ridha's *Tafsīr al-Manār* demonstrates higher compatibility through its emphasis on social responsibility and ethical-functional leadership. However, despite being more progressive, traces of gender hierarchy remain evident. This implies that both classical and reformist approaches have limitations, thereby requiring a more substantive and contextual reconstruction of *qiwamah* so that it can genuinely align with the demands of gender justice in the contemporary era.

Reconstruction of ethical-relational *Qiwamah*

The integration of comparative exegetical analysis, hermeneutical critique, and *maqāṣid*-based evaluation produces a reconstructive understanding of *qiwamah* that differs from both classical and reformist formulations. Rather than defining *qiwamah* as male authority, the findings indicate that the concept should be understood as an ethical and relational responsibility grounded in justice, mutual care, human dignity, and the prevention of harm. In this model, leadership is not determined by gender superiority, but by the capacity to fulfill ethical responsibilities within family and social relations.

This reconstruction is based on four interrelated principles. First, *qiwamah* should be understood as responsibility rather than domination. Second, authority within family relations must be exercised in accordance with justice and human dignity. Third, the legitimacy of leadership is linked to ethical competence and responsibility, rather than merely biological sex. Fourth, any interpretation that legitimizes harm, coercion, or violence is inconsistent with the higher objectives of Islamic law. These principles position *qiwamah* as an ethical-relational framework that supports partnership, mutual accountability, and gender justice, while remaining rooted in Qur'anic values. This reconstructive model can be further distinguished from both classical and reformist formulations through several conceptual dimensions. Table 4 summarizes the main characteristics of the classical, reformist, and ethical-relational understandings of *qiwamah* identified in this study.

Table 5

Characteristics of Classical, Reformist, and Ethical-Relational Models of Qiwamah

Dimension	Classical Model	Reformist Model	Ethical-Relational Model (Reconstructed)
Leadership	Hierarchical authority	Social responsibility	Ethical responsibility
Basis of Leadership	Male superiority	Functional responsibility	Ethical competence
Family Relations	Obedience	Agency	Mutual accountability
Conflict Resolution	Physical discipline	Harm reduction	Non-violence and human dignity

Source: Compiled by the authors, 2026.

Table 5 demonstrates that the reconstructed model of *qiwamah* moves beyond both the classical hierarchical and the reformist functional approaches. While the classical model is grounded in male authority and superiority, and the reformist model emphasizes social responsibility and functional leadership, the ethical-relational model places ethical competence, mutual accountability, and non-violence at the center of family relations. This reconstruction reflects the integration of Abu Zayd's hermeneutical perspective, which

emphasizes the historical and contextual nature of interpretation, with *maqāṣid*-based evaluation that prioritizes justice, human dignity, and the prevention of harm. Accordingly, the proposed model provides a coherent conceptual framework for advancing gender justice while remaining consistent with the ethical objectives of Islamic law.

The findings of this study demonstrate a progressive transformation in the interpretation of *qiwāmah*, from hierarchical authority toward ethical responsibility. Comparative exegetical analysis reveals significant differences between Ibn Kathir and Tafsīr al-Manār in their understanding of authority, gender roles, *nushūz*, and *ḍaraba*. Hermeneutical analysis further demonstrates that these differences are shaped by distinct socio-historical contexts and epistemological assumptions rather than by the Qur'anic text alone. A *maqāṣid*-based evaluation indicates that, although the reformist interpretation is more compatible with the principles of justice, human dignity, and the prevention of harm, neither the classical nor the reformist model fully satisfies the demands of contemporary gender justice. Integrating these findings, this study reconstructs *qiwāmah* as an ethical-relational responsibility grounded in justice, mutual accountability, human dignity, and non-violence. This ethical-relational model constitutes the principal finding of this study.

Discussion

This study identifies four principal findings concerning the conceptual interpretation of *qiwāmah* in Q. al-Nisā' [4]:34 through comparative exegetical analysis, critical hermeneutics, and a *maqāṣid*-based approach. First, it reveals a progressive transformation from hierarchical authority in *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* to ethical responsibility in *Tafsīr al-Manār*. Second, the differences between the two commentaries are not merely textual but also epistemological, as they are shaped by distinct socio-historical contexts. Third, the *maqāṣid* evaluation demonstrates that both interpretations remain limited in addressing contemporary gender justice, although *al-Manār* is comparatively more adaptive. Fourth, this study reconstructs *qiwāmah* as an ethical-relational responsibility grounded in justice, human dignity, reciprocal accountability, and non-violence, with leadership determined by ethical competence rather than gender. The interpretation of *qiwāmah* cannot be separated from constantly changing social realities; therefore, continuous reconstruction is necessary to ensure its alignment with the ethical objectives of the Qur'an in contemporary contexts.

This study is socially relevant to the realities of contemporary Muslim societies, particularly in Indonesia, where unequal gender relations within the household remain a pressing concern (Malghan & Swaminathan, 2021). Ibn Kathīr's hierarchical interpretation, which positions men as absolute leaders and women as subordinate subjects (Kathīr, 1998), is frequently invoked to legitimize discriminatory practices, domestic violence, and restrictions on women's access to the public sphere. Such an understanding remains influential among the public and within religious educational institutions, thereby contributing to inequitable family policies and inadequate protection for women (Delatolla et al., 2021; Yeganeh, 2022). By contrast, the reformist approach of *Tafsīr al-Manār*, which emphasizes ethical responsibility and functional leadership (Riḍhā, 1990), offers a more adaptive framework for addressing contemporary demands for gender equality and justice, although it continues to retain male leadership as a normative structure. This divergence demonstrates that interpretations of *qiwāmah* are shaped not only by the Qur'anic text but also by the socio-historical contexts and epistemological assumptions underlying each exegete's interpretive framework. Nevertheless, gender-based violence that violates human dignity (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*) through intersecting forms of physical, structural, and psychological violence remains widespread (Montesanti, 2015; Kerman & Betrus, 2020; Sukataman et al.,

2025). Therefore, a *maqāṣid*-based approach that prioritizes justice (*'adl*) and the prevention of harm (*dar' al-mafāsid*) is crucial for critically examining the limitations of both interpretations and reconstructing *qiwāmah* as an ethical-relational responsibility oriented toward justice and non-violence.

Theoretically, the differences between Ibn Kathīr and *Tafsīr al-Manār* result from the interaction among text, context, and interpreter, as emphasized in Abu Zayd's hermeneutics (Abu Zayd, 1990; Madany, 1991; Fazeli et al., 2022). Ibn Kathīr represents a classical epistemology grounded in transmitted reports, grammatical analysis, and theological stratification, which frames *qiwāmah* within a hierarchical structure of authority (Abdul-Raof, 2012; Mol, 2013). By contrast, *Tafsīr al-Manār* integrates the classical tradition, rational inquiry, and social reality, although it continues to retain male leadership as its normative framework (Eslami, 1997; Safa et al., 2025). From a *maqāṣid* perspective, such a hierarchy raises ethical concerns because substantive justice requires the transcendence of unequal social relations (Al Idrusiah et al., 2024; Bawono et al., 2025). Although more adaptive, *al-Manār* does not fully realize contemporary gender justice. Thus, both commentaries remain limited in fulfilling the principles of justice, human dignity, and reciprocal accountability. Moreover, the *maqāṣid* principle of *hifz al-nafs* undermines the justification of *ḍarb*, as interpretations that legitimize physical violence are incompatible with the protection of life and human integrity (Laksana et al., 2025; Nuroniyah et al., 2025). Therefore, *maqāṣid* provides a normative foundation for reconstructing *qiwāmah* as an ethical-relational responsibility oriented toward justice, human dignity, reciprocal accountability, and non-violence.

This study demonstrates that religious interpretations, including interpretations of *qiwāmah*, are never final; rather, they are continuously shaped by the interaction among the text, the interpreter, and the surrounding socio-historical context. It further suggests that engaging responsibly with the Qur'an in the contemporary era requires the intellectual courage to critically reassess both classical and reformist traditions without becoming trapped in a rigid binary between the "orthodox" and the "modernist" (Coruh, 2019; Ansharullah & Basuni, 2025). The reconstruction of *qiwāmah* as an ethical-relational responsibility highlights that justice, human dignity, and the protection of life must be treated as primary ethical objectives in every interpretation of the text. This study also encourages a reflective position in which interpretive authority is not monopolized by a particular group or gender but remains open to the critical participation of all those who possess the necessary competence and a commitment to social justice (Hodson, 2022). Ultimately, the findings show that Qur'anic meaning is dynamic because it is continually produced through the interaction among text, interpreter, and socio-historical context. Accordingly, the task of the interpreter is to continuously reconstruct the Qur'an's ethical potential so that it remains relevant to contemporary humanitarian challenges (Jaiyeoba et al., 2024; Ichwan, 2025; Laksana et al., 2025).

Previous studies on Q. al-Nisā' [4]:34 have generally developed along three major strands. The first focuses on gender-sensitive reinterpretations of *qiwāmah*, *nushūz*, and *ḍaraba* by advancing alternative readings that challenge patriarchal understandings (Ahmad & Rasheed, 2018; Ghafournia, 2017). The second employs Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's critical hermeneutics to demonstrate the contextual and historical nature of Qur'anic interpretation (Akbar, 2021; Moch, 2022; Mufid et al., 2023). The third applies *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* to issues of gender justice, violence, and human dignity (Juliansyahzen, 2022; Muhsin et al., 2021; Nuroniyah et al., 2025). The findings of the present study are consistent with these three strands in interpreting *qiwāmah* beyond hierarchical relations and recognizing the influence

of socio-historical and epistemological factors. Unlike previous studies, which have generally examined these approaches separately, this research integrates comparative exegetical analysis, Abu Zayd's hermeneutics, and Auda's systems-based *maqāṣid* framework. This integration enables the reconstruction of *qiwāmah* as an ethical-relational concept grounded in justice, human dignity, and non-violence, thereby providing a more comprehensive framework for addressing contemporary gender justice.

Because *qiwāmah* is reconstructed as an ethical-relational responsibility grounded in justice, human dignity, and non-violence, this study generates several practical implications. First, religious educational institutions should revise their curricula on Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic family law by integrating contextual and ethical approaches, thereby preventing interpretation from being used to legitimize gender-based violence and unequal power relations. Second, policymakers and Islamic legal authorities are encouraged to reassess family laws that continue to rely on exclusive male authority and to strengthen the protection of life (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*) and dignity (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*) through the principle of non-violence. Third, religious leaders and gender activists should promote an understanding of *qiwāmah* as a form of ethical leadership that is contextual, responsive to social change, and supportive of egalitarian and cooperative family structures. Fourth, Islamic discourse should create more inclusive spaces for women's participation in interpretive authority so that gender studies become more socially responsive and more firmly oriented toward justice.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the interpretation of Q. al-Nisā' [4]:34, particularly the concept of *qiwāmah*, is historical, contextual, and dynamic and therefore cannot be regarded as conveying a final and immutable meaning. A comparative analysis of *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* and *Tafsīr al-Manār* reveals a transformation from understanding *qiwāmah* as hierarchical male authority to conceptualizing it as a more contextual form of leadership oriented toward ethical responsibility. The differences between the two commentaries are shaped not only by the Qur'anic text but also by the socio-historical contexts and epistemological assumptions underlying their respective interpretive processes. An evaluation from the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* demonstrates that, although *Tafsīr al-Manār* is more adaptive than *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, both interpretations remain limited in fully realizing the principles of contemporary gender justice. By integrating Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's critical hermeneutics with Jasser Auda's systems-based *maqāṣid* framework, this study makes a theoretical contribution by developing an analytical model that combines historical interpretation with ethical evaluation. It also reconstructs *qiwāmah* as an ethical-relational responsibility grounded in justice, reciprocal accountability, human dignity, and non-violence.

This study makes a theoretical contribution by affirming that the reinterpretation of *qiwāmah* requires an approach that takes both contextual and ethical dimensions into account. The integration of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's critical hermeneutics with Jasser Auda's systems-based *maqāṣid* framework demonstrates that these approaches are mutually complementary in explaining the construction of meaning and evaluating the ethical implications of interpretation. This framework enriches the fields of Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic legal ethics, and gender justice by reconstructing *qiwāmah* as an ethical-relational responsibility. In practical terms, the study provides a conceptual foundation that may serve as a reference for the development of religious education, Islamic family law discourse, and efforts to foster more equitable and violence-free family relations.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis is confined to Q. al-Nisā' [4]:34 and two exegetical works, namely *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* and *Tafsīr al-Manār*. Although these works are representative, they do not fully capture the diversity of gender-related interpretations within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Second, the textual and theoretical approaches employed in this study have not been empirically tested. Consequently, the study does not examine how the reconstruction of *qiwamah* as an ethical-relational responsibility is received or implemented within contemporary Muslim communities. Third, integrating Abu Zayd's critical hermeneutics, which emphasizes historical contingency, with the normatively oriented *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* approach requires further conceptual refinement. Future research should therefore broaden the scope of analysis to include diverse exegetical traditions, incorporate the perspectives of women and gender-conscious interpreters, and conduct empirical studies on the implementation of ethical-relational *qiwamah* in Islamic family law, religious education, and the social practices of Muslim communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author sincerely acknowledges all colleagues and fellow researchers who provided valuable comments, constructive criticism, and intellectual support during the preparation of this manuscript. Their thoughtful discussions and scholarly insights contributed significantly to the refinement of the arguments and overall quality of this study. The author also gratefully acknowledges the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions, which greatly improved the manuscript.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Ihya' Ulumudin: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Visualization; Writing Original Draft; Writing Review & Editing. **Aswadi:** Conceptualization; Methodology; Supervision; Validation. **Abu Bakar:** Formal Analysis; Validation; Editing. **Faiqotul Mala:** Investigation; Resources; Validation; Writing Review & Editing. **Moch. Mahsun:** Conceptualization; Methodology; Supervision; Project Administration; Writing Review & Editing. **Raihan Nasir:** Conceptualization; Formal Analysis; Methodology; Validation.

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