



Reconstructing Egalitarian Relations between Men and Women through a Critique of Misogynistic Interpretations of Qur'anic Verses from the Perspective of *Mubādalāh*

Wan Rafiqul A'ala binti Mohd Rashid^{1*}, Erina Pane², Akhmad Junaedi³

¹ Universitas Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Malaysia

² Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia

³ Judge Pengadilan Agama Wonogiri, Central Java, Indonesia

Abstract: This article examines the problem of interpretive bias in Qur'anic verses concerning relations between men and women, which often shapes gender hierarchy in the family, religious education, and Indonesian Muslim social discourse. The study aims to analyze hierarchical interpretive patterns regarding *qawwāmūn*, *darajah*, women's testimony, and polygamy; explain their implications for the construction of gender relations; and formulate an applicable interpretive model based on *mubādalāh*. This article is a qualitative library-based study employing a thematic-critical *tafsir* approach. Primary sources include gender-related Qur'anic verses, classical and modern exegesis, and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh*, whereas secondary sources consist of journal articles, academic books, and studies on Islamic family law. The analysis applies *mubādalāh* theory through the principles of reciprocity, justice, public welfare, shared responsibility, and human dignity. The novelty of this article lies in integrating *tafsir* criticism, Indonesian socio-religious analysis, and an applicable reconstruction model. The findings demonstrate that interpretive bias emerges when verses are detached from their context and moral objectives. The article contributes to policy reform in religious education, preaching, family guidance, and gender-just Islamic family law.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Misogynistic Interpretation, Mubādalāh, Qur'anic Interpretation.

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji problem bias penafsiran terhadap ayat-ayat relasi laki-laki dan perempuan yang sering membentuk hierarki gender dalam keluarga, pendidikan keagamaan, dan wacana sosial Muslim Indonesia. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menganalisis pola tafsir hierarkis atas *qawwāmūn*, *darajah*, kesaksian perempuan, dan poligami; menjelaskan implikasinya terhadap konstruksi relasi gender; serta merumuskan model interpretasi aplikatif berbasis *mubādalāh*. Penelitian ini merupakan artikel kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan pendekatan tafsir tematik-kritis. Sumber primer mencakup ayat-ayat relasi gender, tafsir klasik dan modern, serta karya *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh* Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, sedangkan sumber sekunder meliputi artikel jurnal, buku akademik, dan kajian hukum keluarga Islam. Analisis dilakukan dengan teori *mubādalāh* melalui prinsip kesalingan, keadilan, kemaslahatan, tanggung jawab bersama, dan martabat manusia. Kebaruan artikel ini terletak pada integrasi kritik tafsir, analisis sosial-keagamaan Indonesia, dan model rekonstruksi aplikatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa bias tafsir muncul ketika ayat dilepaskan dari konteks dan tujuan moralnya. Artikel ini berkontribusi pada reformasi kebijakan pendidikan keagamaan, dakwah, bimbingan keluarga, dan hukum keluarga Islam yang adil gender.

Kata Kunci: Kesenjangan Gender, *Mubādalāh*, Penafsiran Al-Qur'an, Penafsiran Misoginis

Corresponding author:

Wan Rafiqul A'ala binti Mohd Rashid
Email: wawanrafiqu@gmail.com

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Introduction

Relations between men and women in Islam have become a complex and continuously debated discourse because they concern not only biological aspects but also the social, political, legal, and religious structures that have shaped such relations throughout history (Barlas, 2002). This complexity is reinforced by the plurality of interpretations of several Qur'anic verses that some scholars regard as gender-biased or that have been used to sustain patriarchal structures, such as QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34 on *qawwāmūn*, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:282 on women's testimony, and QS. An-Nisā' [4]:3 on polygamy (Wadud, 1999). Although these verses have specific historical contexts and moral objectives, classical *tafsir* traditions have often given literal emphasis that strengthens restrictions on women across various spheres of life (Roded, 2006).

In the Indonesian context, this tendency toward bias has significant socio-religious implications, particularly in the formation of hierarchical family structures and social relations (Ismah, 2024). Religious narratives are often used to reinforce the assumption that women occupy a subordinate position and must obey men as leaders of the family and community (Mu'tasim, 2018). Consequently, male leadership is perceived as an absolute norm that leaves little room for deliberation, whereas women are often considered to lack full legitimacy in decision-making related to both public and domestic spheres (Wan Abd Aziz & Faizhal, 2025). This condition is reinforced by mainstream religious discourse through sermons, popular *fiqh* books, and *pesantren* learning materials, some of which still refer to textualist *tafsir* without considering the Qur'anic moral principles of justice, reciprocity, and universal humanity (Rohman, 2020).

The central problem of this article does not lie in the Qur'anic text itself, nor merely in the plurality of *tafsir* traditions, but in the persistence of interpretive patterns that transform historically situated readings into normative religious justifications for gender hierarchy. Although contemporary Muslim scholarship has developed feminist, contextual, *maqāṣid*-based, and *mubādalāh*-oriented hermeneutics, popular religious discourse in Indonesia continues to reproduce hierarchical meanings of *qawwāmūn*, *darajah*, women's testimony, and polygamy in family relations, religious education, preaching, and Islamic family law. Interpretations that position men as authoritative subjects and women as objects of obedience have shaped a socio-religious worldview in which women's subordination is perceived as normal, legitimate, and even religiously mandated. This pattern has concrete implications in three interrelated domains: in the family, husband-wife relations are often understood vertically rather than as a partnership based on deliberation and shared responsibility; in religious education, textualist reading practices are transmitted with limited critical engagement with patriarchal bias; and in the socio-legal sphere, women remain vulnerable in cases involving domestic violence, polygamy, divorce, and family decision-making. Komnas Perempuan affirms that gender-based violence against women is not an isolated individual incident, but a structural problem rooted in gendered power imbalance (Komnas Perempuan, 2025, p. 1). This situation indicates that gender inequality cannot be separated from social construction, including religious construction operating through *tafsir*, popular *fiqh*, sermons, and Islamic educational authority. Therefore, the problem addressed in this article is both epistemological and practical: gender-just interpretation has often remained at the level of critique, while an applicable model that connects textual rereading, socio-religious reproduction, and institutional transformation remains insufficiently developed.

Gender-based discrimination carried out in the name of religion can be observed across various social sectors. In family life, for example, unequal divisions between domestic and public roles often impose a disproportionate burden on women, although both men and women share moral and spiritual responsibilities within the household (Nurmila, 2009). In public spaces, women's voices are often deemed less legitimate, particularly when they

express views in theological discussions. In more extreme cases, certain verses are interpreted literally to justify violence against women, such as the interpretation of *wadribūhunna* in QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34 as legitimating wife beating (Abu Zayd, 2000). Such patterns not only create structural injustice but also reduce women's dignity as equal moral subjects in Islamic teaching.

The most serious implication of gender-biased interpretation is the displacement of the Qur'an's ethical message from justice toward the legitimation of domination. Verses originally revealed in contexts of social protection, regulation of family responsibility, and restriction of practices harmful to vulnerable groups are often read separately from their moral objectives. QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34, for example, is frequently used as the basis for absolute male leadership, although the term *qawwāmūn* is closely related to responsibility, maintenance, and social protection. QS. An-Nisā' [4]:3 is often cited to justify polygamy, whereas the condition of justice that constitutes its core limitation is not adequately placed at the center of analysis. Hasan, Jahar, Umar, and Abdullah (2022, pp. 1-3) demonstrate that patriarchal ideology can shape the interpretation of polygamy in ways that position women as objects of socio-religious practice rather than subjects whose dignity and justice must be protected (Fauzi & Nasuha, 2025). This condition shows that the research problem of this article is not merely textual but also epistemological and social, namely how *tafsir* produced in a particular historical context becomes a basis for justifying unequal relational structures in contemporary Muslim life.

Reconstruction is necessary because some religious readings still conflate the normative message of the Qur'an with the patriarchal social constructions surrounding the history of interpretation. Sacred texts have a moral orientation that affirms justice, *rahmah*, public welfare, and human responsibility, whereas *tafsir* is the product of human intellectual work shaped by language, social context, scholarly authority, and cultural structures of its time (Nasr, 2015). This distinction is crucial so that critique of gender-biased *tafsir* is not understood as criticism of the Qur'an, but rather as a scholarly effort to return textual reading to its ethical principles. Wadud (2021, p. 497) emphasizes the importance of women's lived experience and social reality in Qur'anic hermeneutics because classical interpretive models tend to center male experience as universal experience. Barlas (2002, pp. 1-3) also rejects the assumption that the Qur'an intrinsically supports patriarchy, since patriarchy operates primarily through modes of reading, interpretive authority, and social constructions attached to the text. This argument provides the basis for understanding gender reconstruction not as an alteration of religious teachings, but as a reorganization of how male-female relations are understood in accordance with the Qur'an's fundamental values.

In response to this condition, various contemporary Muslim scholars have proposed more humanistic and gender-just hermeneutical approaches, including the *mubādalah* paradigm developed by Faqihuddin Abdul Qadir. This approach emphasizes the principle of reciprocity in understanding relations between men and women, while placing justice, equality, and public welfare as ethical foundations for reading religious texts (Qadir, 2019). The *mubādalah* paradigm affirms that every command, prohibition, or teaching applicable to men also applies to women, unless there is explicit evidence that differentiates them. Consequently, this paradigm seeks to shift the hierarchical meanings that have long dominated *tafsir* tradition (Risal, 2021).

The offer of *mubādalah* is directly relevant to this research problem because it not only corrects partial meanings of certain verses but also reconstructs the paradigm of relations. The reconstruction intended in this article consists of three layers. The first is epistemological reconstruction, namely shifting the mode of reading from male domination toward the reciprocity of men and women as moral subjects who equally receive the ethical burden of the Qur'an (Al Mustaqim et al., 2024). The second is normative reconstruction, namely reinterpreting *qawwāmūn*, *darajah*, testimony, leadership, and polygamy based on justice,

public welfare, and shared responsibility. The third is socio-practical reconstruction, namely directing the results of interpretation toward the renewal of religious education, Muslim family guidance, religious preaching, and decision-making in Islamic family law. Abdul Kodir (2019, pp. 201-204) positions *mubādalah* as a mode of reading that affirms reciprocal meaning in texts, so that religious messages that appear to address one sex can be drawn into moral principles applicable to both, as long as there is no specific evidence that differentiates them. This principle makes *mubādalah* relevant as an analytical framework because it can connect *tafsir* critique, contextual reading, and the need for social transformation in a more comprehensive manner (Santoso, 2025).

A number of previous studies have made important contributions to the critique of gender bias in Qur'anic interpretation. Amina Wadud work emphasizes the need for holistic reading of the Qur'anic text so that gender-related verses are not understood apart from the vision of tawhid, justice, and human moral equality (Wadud, 1999, pp. 1-2; Wadud, 2021, p. 497). Asma Barlas demonstrates that patriarchy does not originate from the Qur'an as revelation but from modes of reading that place men at the center of religious and social authority (Barlas, 2002, pp. 1-3). Hasan et al. (2022, pp. 1-4) show that patriarchal ideology can shape gender-biased *tafsir* in the issue of polygamy, particularly when verses are understood literally without placing justice as the limiting principle. Studies of *mubādalah* in Islamic family law also show that the principle of reciprocity can be used to minimize domination, subordination, and violence in the family (Imtihanah, 2020, pp. 240-243; Nafi & Ali, 2024, pp. 137-158).

The novelty of this article lies in its integrative reconstruction of gender-related Qur'anic interpretation through *mubādalah*. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on feminist critique, legal reform, or theoretical discussions of reciprocity, this article combines three analytical layers: first, a critical examination of hierarchical *tafsir* on *qawwāmūn*, *darajah*, women's testimony, and polygamy; second, an analysis of how such interpretations are reproduced in Indonesian socio-religious discourse; and third, the formulation of an applicable *mubādalah*-based interpretive model for religious education, preaching, family guidance, and Islamic family law. Through this integration, the article contributes to the development of *mubādalah* Studies as both a hermeneutical framework and a transformative approach to social justice.

The urgency of this study lies in the pressing need to respond to the tension between the normative Islamic value of justice and socio-religious realities that continue to reproduce gender inequality. This tension is visible when verses on male-female relations are more often used as a basis for hierarchical authority than as an ethical foundation for shared responsibility. Such a situation produces both academic and social problems. The academic problem concerns the inadequacy of reading models capable of systematically connecting critique of classical *tafsir*, contextual hermeneutics, and the principle of *mubādalah*. The social problem lies in the persistence of religious narratives that weaken women's positions in the family, education, and public sphere. Wijaya, Muchlis, and Rohmatulloh (2025, pp. 77-98) argue that discourse on gender justice in the Qur'an must move beyond the dichotomy between defending tradition and demanding equality, because Qur'anic justice must be read dynamically and in relation to contemporary social contexts. Based on this argument, the study is important for constructing a theological foundation that is not only doctrinally legitimate but also responsive to unequal power relations experienced by women in socio-religious life.

Based on this problem construction, this article positions *mubādalah* as the main analytical lens for reconstructing relations between men and women from hierarchical patterns toward reciprocal, collaborative, and just relations. Reconstruction in this study is not understood as the cancellation of *tafsir* tradition, but as a critical rereading of parts of *tafsir* that are no longer adequate for addressing contemporary humanitarian problems. The

tafsir tradition remains an important Islamic intellectual heritage, yet its authority must be read historically, methodologically, and ethically. This article argues that gender-related verses must be understood through the integration of the context of revelation, the moral principles of the Qur'an, and the contemporary social reality of women. Such integration is necessary so that interpretation does not merely reproduce inherited meanings but can present justice, reciprocity, and public welfare as the main orientation of Muslim family and social life. Through this framework, the article is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of *mubādalāh* studies, methodologically to the rereading of gender-related verses, and practically to the renewal of religious discourse that is more just for both women and men.

Based on the foregoing background, this study is guided by the following research questions. First, how have hierarchical interpretive patterns concerning *qawwāmūn*, *darajah*, women's testimony, and polygamy been constructed in classical, modern, and contemporary *tafsir* literature? Second, how are gender-biased interpretations of these verses reproduced in Indonesian socio-religious discourse, particularly in family relations, religious education, preaching, and Islamic family law discourse? Third, how can the *mubādalāh* perspective be formulated as an applicable interpretive model for reconstructing relations between men and women from hierarchical patterns toward reciprocal, collaborative, and justice-oriented relations?

The significance of this study lies in its effort to respond to the urgent challenge of gender-biased religious interpretation that continues to reproduce unequal power relations in Muslim family life, religious education, preaching, and socio-legal discourse. This article identifies the central issue not merely as a difference of opinion within *tafsir* literature, but as the social and epistemological problem of interpretive patterns that legitimize hierarchy, subordination, absolute obedience, and unequal authority in the name of religion. Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the construction of hierarchical interpretations, explain their reproduction within Indonesian socio-religious contexts, and formulate a *mubādalāh*-based interpretive model that reconnects gender-related Qur'anic verses with the ethical principles of reciprocity, justice, shared responsibility, public welfare, and human dignity. In this regard, the study is significant because it offers both a critical reading of inherited interpretive bias and an applicable framework for developing more egalitarian religious discourse in contemporary Muslim society.

Method

This study employs a qualitative method in the form of library research and a thematic-critical *tafsir* approach. This method is chosen because the object of study consists of texts, namely Qur'anic verses on relations between men and women and their interpretive construction in *tafsir* literature. The study does not use interviews or field observation; rather, it is conducted through the tracing, selection, reading, and analysis of relevant literature. The thematic *tafsir* approach is used to gather verses connected by a shared theme, whereas the critical approach is used to assess whether interpretive patterns construct equal relations or instead reinforce hierarchical relations between men and women. Through this approach, the study seeks to reread gender-related *tafsir* more contextually through the perspective of *mubādalāh*.

The data sources consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include Qur'anic verses directly related to gender relations, namely QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34 on *qawwāmūn* and *waḍribūhunna*, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:228 on *darajah*, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:282 on testimony, QS. An-Nisā' [4]:3 and QS. An-Nisā' [4]:129 on polygamy and justice, and QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:187 on reciprocal relations in the family. Primary sources also include classical and modern/contemporary *tafsir* works, such as *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ*, and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's *Qirā'ah*

Mubādalah. Secondary sources include academic books, nationally accredited journal articles, international journal articles, and previous studies on Islamic feminism, gender justice, contextual *tafsir*, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, *mubādalah*, and Islamic family law (Mernissi, 1991).

Data were collected through a systematic literature search by establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria. The literature used consists of sources directly discussing verses on male-female relations, gender *tafsir*, critiques of patriarchal interpretation, *mubādalah* theory, and the socio-religious implications of *tafsir* for women’s position. Excluded sources include popular writings without academic grounding, religious opinion pieces without scholarly references, sources that merely repeat discussions without analytical contribution, and references unrelated to the focus on reconstructing male-female relations through the perspective of *mubādalah*. After the literature was collected, the data were classified according to major themes, namely family leadership, women’s testimony, polygamy, domestic violence, husband-wife relations, and the principle of reciprocity. This classification ensured that the analysis did not expand into gender issues in general, but remained focused on reconstructing relations between men and women through the *mubādalah* perspective.

Data analysis was conducted through several operational steps. The first step was identifying the main verses frequently used in discourse on gender relations. The second step was reading the interpretations of these verses in classical, modern, and contemporary *tafsir* to identify differences in interpretive emphasis. The third step was comparing hierarchical interpretive patterns with more contextual and justice-oriented interpretations. The fourth step was identifying elements of gender bias, such as male superiority, female subordination, justification of absolute obedience, or legitimation of discriminatory practices. The fifth step was synthesizing the analysis to formulate an applicable reading model that may be used in religious education, *pesantren*, Islamic preaching, Muslim family guidance, and the development of Islamic family law discourse.

Mubādalah theory is used as the main analytical tool to assess and reconstruct interpretive patterns. Its procedure involves reading every gender-related verse through the principles of reciprocity, justice, public welfare, shared responsibility, and respect for human dignity. Each interpretation is examined through analytical questions: does the interpretation position men and women as equal moral subjects; does the meaning produced generate reciprocal or dominative relations; and does the interpretation align with the Qur’an’s fundamental values of justice and *rahmah*. Through this procedure, *mubādalah* is not used merely as a supporting theory but as an analytical method for distinguishing between the normative message of the Qur’an and interpretive constructions shaped by patriarchal culture. The final analysis is directed toward reconstructing *tafsir* in a more just, applicable, and relevant way for contemporary Muslim societies.

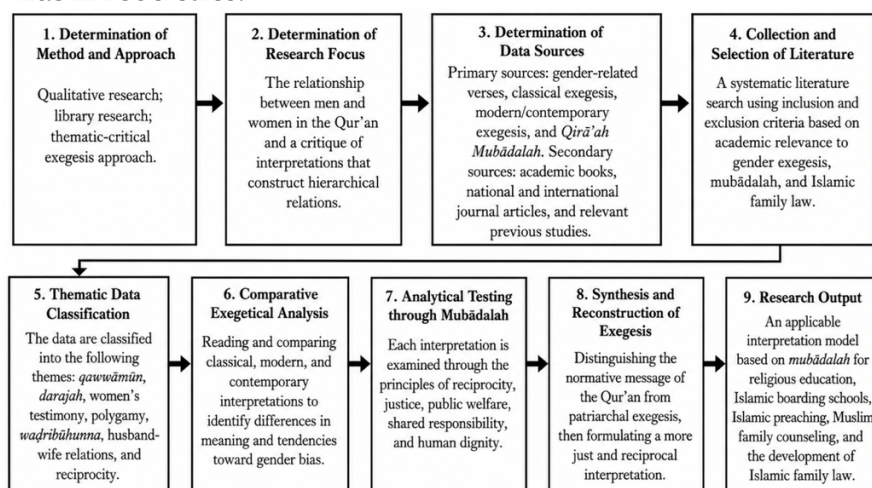


Figure 1: Methodology Framework

Results

Hierarchical Interpretive Patterns concerning Qawwāmūn, Darajah, Testimony, and Polygamy

The literature review of *tafsir* demonstrates that a number of verses concerning relations between men and women have frequently been understood through hierarchical interpretive patterns. This pattern is especially visible in readings of QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34 on *qawwāmūn*, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:228 on *darajah*, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:282 on women's testimony, and QS. An-Nisā' [4]:3 on polygamy. In some classical *tafsir* works, *qawwāmūn* tends to be understood as the basis for male leadership over women, rather than as a functional responsibility related to protection, maintenance, and family care (Rimanto et al., 2025). Al-Ṭabarī explains *qawwāmūn* as the position of men who have responsibility to regulate and improve women's condition due to the obligation of maintenance and certain advantages understood within the social context of that time (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, Juz 8, pp. 290-292). Al-Qurṭubī also positions men as those who possess authority in the family because of the economic and social responsibilities attached to them (al-Qurṭubī, 2003, Juz 5, pp. 168-170). This finding indicates that in some classical *tafsir*, the meaning of *qawwāmūn* is not merely read as responsibility but develops into legitimation of a relational structure that positions men as leaders and women as those being led.

A similar pattern is found in the interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:228 concerning *darajah*. Several classical interpretations understand *darajah* as men's superiority over women in family relations (Yuhani'ah et al., 2025). This meaning subsequently shapes a normative construction that husbands have a higher position than wives. However, when read in the context of divorce and reconciliation, *darajah* can be understood as greater moral responsibility in maintaining the process of reconciliation, rather than as the ontological superiority of men. Amina Wadud emphasizes that readings of gender-related verses must be holistic because meanings separated from the overall message of the Qur'an often produce conclusions biased against women (Wadud, 1999, pp. 1-2). Asma Barlas also shows that the Qur'an does not intrinsically construct patriarchy; rather, patriarchy operates through interpretive authority, social structures, and *tafsir* shaped by male experience as the center of religious knowledge (Barlas, 2002, pp. 1-3). Thus, the finding on *darajah* reveals a shift from an ethical message of responsibility toward a hierarchical reading of the status of men and women.

Another finding appears in the interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:282 on women's testimony. This verse is often understood as the basis for considering women's testimony to be worth half that of men. In textual readings that do not consider the socio-economic context of Arabian society at the time of revelation, the verse may produce the assumption that women have weaker rational or intellectual capacity. In fact, the context of the verse relates to debt transactions, economic literacy, and women's social experience in transactional spaces at that time. Saeed argues that legal verses in the Qur'an must be read by considering the context of revelation, moral objectives, and changing social conditions among Muslim societies (Saeed, 2006, pp. 116-119). Through this framework, women's testimony cannot serve as a permanent basis for devaluing women's rational capacity, since the main issue in the verse concerns economic participation rather than intellectual nature.

Hierarchical interpretive patterns are also visible in the interpretation of QS. An-Nisā' [4]:3 concerning polygamy. In some religious discourse, this verse is more often cited as a legal basis for permitting polygamy than as a restriction on polygamous practice and a protection for women and orphans. The phrase *fa in khiftum allā ta'dilū fa wāḥidah*, however, indicates that justice is the primary condition limiting the practice. Hasan, Jahar, Umar, and Abdullah find that interpretations of polygamy are often influenced by patriarchal ideology, thereby positioning women as objects of socio-religious practice rather than as subjects whose justice

and dignity must be protected (Hasan et al., 2022, pp. 1-4). This study also emphasizes that interpretive bias may emerge when verses are read literally without considering justice and humanity as the primary orientation. This finding shows that the problem of interpretation does not lie in the Qur'anic text, but in interpretive practices that detach verses from their socio-historical contexts and ethical objectives.

Reproduction of Interpretive Bias in Indonesian Socio-Religious Discourse

The second finding indicates that interpretive bias does not remain at the textual level but is reproduced in Indonesian socio-religious discourse (Muhammad, 2001). This reproduction occurs through religious sermons, popular *fiqh* books, the teaching of classical texts in Islamic educational institutions, family guidance materials, and social practices that make men the center of authority in the household. The interpretation of *qawwāmūn* as absolute male leadership, for example, is often translated into unilateral demands for wives' obedience. As a result, husband-wife relations are more readily understood as a relation of command and obedience than as one of cooperation, deliberation, and shared responsibility. Ula explains that in some constructions of family *fiqh*, *qiwāmah* is understood as the husband's leadership right correlated with the wife's obligation to obey, whereas the *mubādalāh* perspective offers a rereading so that *qiwāmah* is understood as shared responsibility within the family (Ula, 2021, pp. 135-148). This finding shows that hierarchical *tafsir* has practical consequences for the formation of family relations among Indonesian Muslims.

The reproduction of interpretive bias is also visible in the justification of unequal divisions between domestic and public roles. Women are often morally positioned as responsible for domestic work, caregiving, and household stability, whereas men are positioned as the primary decision makers. This division becomes problematic when it is understood as a fixed religious prescription rather than as a social construction that may change according to context. Nurmila shows that polygamous practices and family relations in Indonesian Muslim society cannot be separated from patriarchal structures that shape how religion is understood and practiced in everyday life (Nurmila, 2009, pp. 23-25). Komnas Perempuan also emphasizes that gender-based violence against women is a social problem rooted in gender construction and unequal power relations, not merely an individual incident detached from social structure (Komnas Perempuan, 2025, p. 1). The 2025 Annual Notes recorded a general increase in gender-based violence against women to 376,529 cases, indicating that gender inequality must be read as a structural issue requiring more just religious, social, and legal responses (Komnas Perempuan).

This finding also shows that a literal understanding of *wadribūhunna* in QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34 may be used to justify domestic violence. Although not all classical *tafsir* directly encourages violence, readings that position husbands as holders of corrective authority over wives may open space for legitimating actions that degrade women's dignity. Wadud emphasizes that verses often used to restrict women's roles, and even to justify violence, must be reread through the framework of justice, context, and the moral principles of the Qur'an (Wadud, 1999, pp. 70-76). This view is consistent with Islamic feminist hermeneutics, which emphasizes the importance of women's experience as part of interpretation rather than as a passive object of *tafsir* produced by male authority (Wadud, 2021, p. 497).

Thus, the findings indicate that interpretive bias in the Indonesian context operates through two channels. The first is epistemic, namely how religious knowledge is formed through *tafsir*, *fiqh*, sermons, and education. The second is social, namely how this knowledge affects family relations, male authority, women's positions, and public attitudes toward polygamy, wives' obedience, women's testimony, and domestic violence. When biased *tafsir* continues to be reproduced without critique, gender inequality gains religious legitimacy. This condition indicates that *tafsir* reconstruction is not only an academic need but also a social necessity for constructing more just and humane religious relations.

The Contribution of *Mubādalah* in Constructing a Model of Equal Relations

The third finding demonstrates that *mubādalah* makes an important contribution to constructing a model of equal relations between men and women. This contribution lies in the way *mubādalah* shifts interpretation from dominative relations toward reciprocal relations. Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir affirms that *mubādalah* is based on the principle of reciprocity, namely that every message of goodness in religious texts addressed to one sex can basically apply to the other, as long as there is no specific evidence limiting it (Abdul Kodir, 2019, pp. 59-62). Through this principle, men and women are positioned as moral subjects who equally bear religious, social, and family responsibilities. *Mubādalah* does not merely correct biased *tafsir*; it also offers an interpretive procedure that places justice, public welfare, shared responsibility, and human dignity as the criteria for reading texts.

In the context of QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34, *mubādalah* reads *qawwāmūn* as a function of responsibility, not as the superior status of men. Family relations are not understood as a vertical structure that positions the husband as ruler and the wife as a party required to submit, but as a partnership requiring both parties to care for, support, and take responsibility for each other. This reading is consistent with QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:187, which describes husbands and wives as garments for one another. The verse conveys intimacy, protection, concealment of shortcomings, and reciprocity in family life. Nafi and Ali show that *mubādalah* can be used as a method of gender-just interpretation, including for religious court judges facing family law issues related to husband-wife relations, divorce, and justice within the family. This argument indicates that *mubādalah* does not remain a theory of discourse, but can also enter the practical domain of Islamic family law (Nafi & Ali, 2024, pp. 137-158)

Mubādalah also contributes to rereading the issue of polygamy. If patriarchal readings emphasize permissibility, *mubādalah* places justice at the center of meaning. QS. An-Nisā' [4]:3 and QS. An-Nisā' [4]:129 need to be read together to show that the Qur'an is not promoting polygamy as an ideal norm, but rather restricts it through an extremely demanding condition of justice. Hasan et al. emphasize that interpretations of polygamy influenced by patriarchal ideology can ignore women's experience and reinforce exploitation in the name of religious legitimacy (Hasan et al., 2022, pp. 1-4). This finding strengthens the argument that *mubādalah* is needed to return polygamy readings to the principles of justice, protection, and public welfare, rather than mere formal permissibility. Hasan et al.'s article was published in HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies and specifically discusses the influence of patriarchal ideology on gender-biased interpretation in the issue of polygamy (Hasan et al.'s, 2022).

Through this analysis, *mubādalah* contributes to three forms of reconstruction. First, epistemological reconstruction distinguishes between the normative message of the Qur'an and patriarchal *tafsir* shaped by particular social contexts. Second, normative reconstruction reads *qawwāmūn*, *darajah*, testimony, polygamy, and family relations on the basis of reciprocity rather than domination. Third, practical reconstruction formulates a reading model that may be used in religious education, *pesantren*, Islamic preaching, Muslim family guidance, and the development of Islamic family law. Saerozi shows that *qirā'ah mubādalah* can contribute to new understandings of family issues and gender-responsive public policy (Saerozi, 2025). This study confirms that *mubādalah* has practical utility because it connects textual reading, gender justice, and contemporary social needs.

Based on these three sub-findings, the study finds that reconstructing relations between men and women is not sufficiently achieved by criticizing patriarchal *tafsir* in general terms. Reconstruction must be carried out through a systematic procedure: identifying hierarchical interpretive patterns, showing how interpretive bias is reproduced in socio-religious discourse, and then offering *mubādalah* reading as an alternative interpretive model. This model positions men and women as equal moral subjects who share responsibility and are

equally bound by the values of justice and public welfare. Thus, the findings affirm that *mubādalah* can become an analytical and practical framework for constructing more just gender relations in contemporary Indonesian Islam.

Matrix of Findings, Evidence, and Critical Analysis of Gender-Relation *Tafsir*

The findings indicate that interpretive patterns concerning verses regarded as misogynistic in classical *tafsir* tradition tend to be built upon a strong patriarchal social framework. Verses such as QS. An-Nisā’ [4]:34, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:228, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:282, and QS. An-Nisā’ [4]:3 are often interpreted literally without considering the socio-historical context of revelation. As a result, such *tafsir* produces hierarchical meanings that position men as absolute leaders and women as parties expected to obey. In some extreme interpretations, certain verses are even used to legitimate domestic violence, especially through literal readings of *wadribūhunna* in QS. An-Nisā’ [4]:34.

The findings also reveal that gender bias in classical *tafsir* has tangible social implications in Indonesia. Religious discourse circulating in society through sermons, popular *fiqh* books, and *pesantren* education often reproduces patriarchal interpretation by placing men as moral authorities and primary decision makers within the family. This understanding affects the division between domestic and public roles, the legitimization of polygamy without adequate consideration of justice, and the marginalization of women’s voices in religious spaces.

At the same time, the study finds that critique of patriarchal *tafsir* has developed through feminist hermeneutics, *maqāsid al-sharī’ah*, contextual *tafsir*, and philology (Riffat Hassan, 1999). Contemporary scholars such as Fazlur Rahman, Amina Wadud, Riffat Hassan, and Indonesian figures such as Nur Rofiah and Musdah Mulia have offered new readings that place justice, reciprocity, and humanity as central principles in understanding sacred texts (Fazlur Rahman, 1982).

The findings further show that Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir *mubādalah* approach constitutes a significant methodological contribution to the reconstruction of gender relations. *Mubādalah* interprets the entire Qur’anic teaching as a reciprocal principle applicable to men and women, unless a text explicitly indicates a specific limitation. Through this approach, *qawwāmūn* is understood as moral and economic responsibility rather than superiority; *darajah* is understood as moral capacity rather than superiority; and polygamy is positioned as a social dispensation restricted by the principle of justice, not as an ideal norm (Sofiani et al., 2024).

Thus, the study concludes that reconstructing equal gender relations can be achieved by integrating critique of misogynistic interpretation with the principles of reciprocity and justice in *mubādalah* theory. This finding opens space for an applicable interpretive model relevant to Indonesian society while strengthening Qur’anic principles concerning the spiritual and moral equality of men and women (Kusmana, 2018).

Table 1. Concise Matrix of Hierarchical Tafsir Critique and *Mubādalah*-Based Reconstruction

Verse	Hierarchical Tafsir	Critical Note	Mubādalah Reading	Practical Implication
QS. An-Nisā’ [4]:34 on <i>qawwāmūn</i> and <i>wadribūhunna</i>	The verse is often interpreted as the basis for absolute male authority over women and for wives’ unilateral obedience to husbands. In some readings, <i>wadribūhunna</i> is also used to justify corrective violence within the family.	This reading detaches the verse from its socio-historical context, especially the responsibility of maintenance, protection, and family care. It also risks legitimating domination and violence, which	<i>Qawwāmūn</i> should be understood as a function of responsibility rather than male superiority. Family leadership must be read as shared responsibility, protection,	Premarital guidance, family counseling, and religious sermons should emphasize non-violence, mutual responsibility, shared decision-making, and protection of women’s dignity.

		contradict the Qur’anic principles of justice, <i>rahmah</i> , and human dignity.	deliberation, and mutual care between husband and wife.	
QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:228 on <i>darajah</i>	<i>Darajah</i> is often interpreted as a higher status of men over women in marital relations. This reading strengthens the assumption that husbands possess superior authority within the family.	This interpretation tends to remove the verse from the context of divorce, reconciliation, and ethical responsibility. It transforms a contextual moral instruction into a permanent hierarchy between men and women.	<i>Darajah</i> should be read as greater moral responsibility in maintaining justice, reconciliation, and family welfare, not as ontological superiority of men over women.	Marriage and divorce mediation should be based on fairness, accountability, and the dignity of both spouses, rather than on unilateral male privilege.
QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:282 on women’s testimony	The verse is often used to argue that women’s testimony is inherently worth half that of men and that women possess weaker rational or intellectual capacity.	This reading ignores the specific context of debt transactions, economic literacy, and women’s limited participation in commercial activities during the period of revelation. It wrongly turns a contextual legal arrangement into a universal judgment on women’s intellect.	Testimony should be understood through credibility, competence, memory support, and contextual knowledge. Moral and intellectual responsibility belongs to both men and women.	Religious and legal education should avoid stereotypes about women’s intellectual capacity and should promote equal access to economic, legal, and public literacy.
QS. An-Nisā’ [4]:3 and QS. An-Nisā’ [4]:129 on polygamy and justice	The verse is often cited primarily as a legal permission for polygamy and as a male privilege in marriage.	This reading overlooks the context of protecting orphans and vulnerable women. It also marginalizes the strict requirement of justice as the central limitation of polygamy.	Polygamy must be read through the principles of justice, protection, harm prevention, and public welfare. Since justice is extremely difficult to fulfill, the ethical orientation of the Qur’an moves toward protection and relational justice rather than unrestricted permissibility.	Family law discourse, marriage counseling, and judicial reasoning should prioritize justice, consent, women’s dignity, harm prevention, and the welfare of all family members.
QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:187 on reciprocal marital relations	This verse is often underemphasized in hierarchical discourse, although it provides a strong Qur’anic foundation	Neglecting this verse weakens the Qur’anic vision of reciprocity and allows gender relations to be dominated by verses	The metaphor of spouses as garments for one another affirms intimacy, protection, comfort, mutual	Islamic family education should use this verse as a foundational text for building egalitarian, affectionate,

for	mutuality	in	read	through	care,	and	protective,	and
marriage.			authority	and	reciprocal		collaborative	
			obedience.		responsibility		marital relations.	
					between			
					husband	and		
					wife.			

The matrix demonstrates that the problem of misogynistic interpretation does not lie in the Qur'anic verses themselves, but in interpretive patterns that detach the verses from their socio-historical context and ethical objectives. Through the *mubādalāh* perspective, these verses can be reread as foundations for reciprocity, shared responsibility, justice, protection, and human dignity. Therefore, the reconstruction of gender relations requires not only textual reinterpretation, but also practical transformation in religious education, preaching, family counseling, and Islamic family law discourse.

Discussion

The Influence of Gender-Biased Interpretation on the Construction of Gender Relations in Indonesian Muslim Society

Discussion of the influence of gender-biased interpretation must begin with a basic distinction between the Qur'an as revealed text, *tafsir* as a product of human intellectual work, *fiqh* as legal formulation, *hadith* as a normative source with contexts of transmission, and patriarchal culture as a social structure that shapes the production of meaning (Hadjar, 2025). This distinction is important so that critique of gender-biased *tafsir* is not understood as rejection of the Qur'an but as an academic evaluation of how human beings understand the text within specific historical spaces (Hidayat, 2018). The Qur'an contains normative principles of justice, *rahmah*, reciprocity, and human dignity, whereas *tafsir* emerges through the intellectual work of exegetes who are never entirely detached from language, social structure, power relations, and the horizons of knowledge of their time (Auda, 2008).

Barlas affirms that patriarchy is not intrinsic to the Qur'an but operates through modes of reading and interpretive authority that place male experience at the center of religious meaning (Barlas, 2002, pp. 1-3). Wadud also emphasizes that readings of gender-related verses must be holistic because interpretations detached from the overall vision of tawhid may produce conclusions biased against women (Wadud, 1999, pp. 1-2; Wadud, 2021, p. 497). Wadud's 2021 article specifically underscores the importance of women's lived realities in Qur'anic hermeneutics (MDPI).

The mechanism of interpretive bias can be seen through readings of QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34 on *qawwāmūn*. In some classical *tafsir*, the term *qawwāmūn* is understood as the basis for male leadership over women because men are positioned as providers and family guardians. Al-Ṭabarī explains that men have functions of regulation and maintenance over women because of maintenance obligations and social responsibilities attached to them (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, Juz 8, pp. 290-292). Al-Qurṭubī similarly emphasizes men's position as bearers of economic and social responsibility in the family (al-Qurṭubī, 2003, Juz 5, pp. 168-170). Such readings cannot be simplified as "classical *tafsir* is patriarchal" in an absolute sense, because the *tafsir* tradition contains variations in argumentation, linguistic bases, and legal considerations. The problem emerges when the function of responsibility shifts into a claim of absolute male superiority. This shift from responsibility to authority constitutes the problematic point in the construction of gender relations.

Historically, the interpretation of *qawwāmūn* emerged in societies where men occupied a primary role in economic structures, social protection, and public representation. Classical exegetes read the verse within a horizon in which men generally became providers and managers of family affairs. At the historical level, such a reading may be understood as a response to the social structure of its time. At the normative level, however, it becomes

problematic when fixed as a permanent rule for all contexts, including contexts in which women have equal or even greater economic capacity, education, leadership, and social responsibility. Saeed argues that legal verses of the Qur'an must be read by attending to the context of revelation, moral objectives, and changing social conditions among Muslim communities (Saeed, 2006, pp. 116-119). Thus, the reading of *qawwāmūn* needs to move from status-based meaning to functional meaning. The meaning most relevant for contemporary society is not male superiority but responsibility to protect, support, and manage the family justly.

A similar mechanism of bias appears in readings of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:228 on *darajah*. Some *tafsir* understands *darajah* as men's superiority over women in family relations. This understanding subsequently constructs the husband as normatively higher than the wife. Nevertheless, if the verse is read in the context of divorce and reconciliation, *darajah* does not have to mean the ontological superiority of men. It can be read as a greater moral responsibility to exercise restraint, maintain justice, and open space for reconciliation. *Tafsir* that makes *darajah* an absolute advantage risks shifting the ethical message of the verse from responsibility to hierarchy. Abu Zayd warns that religious texts constantly interact with the social and historical contexts of readers, so textual understanding cannot be separated from methodological awareness of the production of meaning (Abu Zayd, 2000, pp. 3-5). In this framework, *darajah* must be returned to the ethical principles of the Qur'an rather than maintained as an instrument that legitimates male status.

QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:282 on women's testimony also shows how historical context can be transformed into a normative claim that disadvantages women. The verse speaks in the context of debt transactions, economic documentation, and social participation in commercial practice. An interpretation that links two female witnesses to women's rational weakness may produce the stereotype that women are less competent in public, legal, economic, and leadership affairs. The problem does not lie in the technical regulation that appeared within a transactional context, but in the generalization that women are naturally lower in intellectual capacity. Wadud rejects such a reading because the Qur'an never constructs moral and intellectual hierarchy between men and women in relation to spiritual responsibility (Wadud, 1999, pp. 70-76). QS. Al-Aḥzāb [33]:35, by contrast, affirms the equality of men and women in faith, obedience, patience, charity, fasting, chastity, and remembrance. Therefore, the verse on testimony should not be used as a basis for limiting women's competence in general.

Comparatively, gender-related verses have different contexts and ethical objectives. QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34 concerns family responsibility, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:228 appears in the context of divorce and reconciliation, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:282 addresses transaction documentation, whereas QS. An-Nisā' [4]:3 appears in the context of protecting orphans and women. These differences indicate that the verses cannot be read through one uniform hierarchical pattern. Proper reading requires attention to social context, moral purpose, and the principle of justice so that verses are not used to justify male domination over women.

The issue of polygamy in QS. An-Nisā' [4]:3 demonstrates a clearer relationship among *tafsir*, *fiqh*, and patriarchal culture. In much popular discourse, this verse is understood as legitimating the permissibility of polygamy. Emphasis on permissibility is often more dominant than emphasis on the condition of justice. Yet the structure of the verse indicates that polygamy appears in the context of protecting orphans and women, and it is limited by the condition of justice. QS. An-Nisā' [4]:129 even stresses the difficulty of achieving perfect justice. Hasan, Jahar, Umar, and Abdullah find that patriarchal ideology can influence the interpretation of polygamy so that women are positioned as objects of socio-religious practice rather than as subjects whose dignity and justice must be protected (Hasan et al., 2022, pp. 1-4). Their article also shows that *tafsir* bias shaped by patriarchal thought has a significant

impact on Qur'anic interpretation of polygamy and calls for reinterpretation based on justice and humanistic values (Hasan et al.'s, 2022).

The influence of gender-biased *tafsir* on social construction in Indonesia is visible in family relations, religious education, and Islamic public discourse. When *qawwāmūn* is understood as absolute leadership, husband-wife relations are easily formed as relations of command and obedience. When *darajah* is interpreted as male status superiority, the wife's position becomes weaker in family negotiation. When the verse on testimony is understood as evidence of women's intellectual weakness, women's participation in public spaces can be questioned. When the polygamy verse emphasizes permission rather than restriction, women's experiences in marriage are often marginalized. The manuscript shows that *tafsir* bias is reproduced through sermons, popular *fiqh* books, *pesantren* education, and socio-religious discourse; therefore, gender inequality operates not only at the textual level but also in social practice. Thus, this discussion strengthens the finding that unequal gender relations do not originate from the Qur'an as revelation but from interpretive patterns, *fiqh* formulations, and social cultures that read texts hierarchically.

Mubādalāh Critique of Patriarchal Interpretive Patterns and Reorientation of Gender-Relation Meanings

Mubādalāh critiques patriarchal *tafsir* by changing the starting point of interpretation. Gender-biased *tafsir* usually begins from the assumption that men are the center of authority, whereas women are the regulated party (Al-Fitri et al., 2025). *Mubādalāh* begins with the principle that men and women are equally moral subjects who receive the Qur'anic message. Abdul Kodir explains that *mubādalāh* works through the principle of reciprocity, namely that a message of goodness addressed to one sex can basically apply to both, unless there is specific evidence that restricts it (Abdul Kodir, 2019, pp. 59-62). This principle is important because many religious texts speak in a seemingly masculine linguistic structure, while their moral values are universal. Thus, *mubādalāh* is not merely a theory of equality but a method of reading that examines whether an interpretation produces just, reciprocal, and beneficial relations.

The main reflection of the *mubādalāh* approach is that interpretation should not stop at literal meaning but must be directed toward the moral message that produces justice for both men and women. *Mubādalāh* examines whether an interpretation produces benefit for both parties, builds cooperation, and preserves human dignity. In this way, *mubādalāh* functions as an evaluative instrument for assessing *tafsir* bias and as a constructive instrument for offering a more just, reciprocal, and *rahmah*-oriented reading of the Qur'an.

In reading QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34, *mubādalāh* does not reject the concept of *qawwāmūn* but corrects its meaning. The concept is not read as men's innate superiority but as a function of responsibility related to the capacity to provide protection, maintenance, management, and care for family relations. This function cannot be understood as a right to dominate but as an obligation to uphold justice. If family responsibility at a particular time was mostly borne by men, *qawwāmūn* may be attached to men in that context. If, in another context, women also bear or even more dominantly carry economic, educational, and caregiving responsibilities, then the principle of responsibility must be read relationally rather than biologically. Ula shows that the *mubādalāh* reading of *qiwāmah* shifts leadership from the dominance of the husband toward shared family responsibility (Ula, 2021, pp. 135-148). This source also confirms that Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir *mubādalāh* theory is used to reread religious texts based on reciprocity.

The *mubādalāh* critique of *darajah* also moves from superiority toward ethical responsibility. QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:228 should not be read as justification for an absolute higher position of men. Within the *mubādalāh* framework, *darajah* is more appropriately understood as moral generosity, reconciliatory responsibility, and the obligation to exercise restraint so

that family relations are not governed through unilateral power. This reading is consistent with the Qur'anic principle that commands justice and goodness in QS. An-Naḥl [16]:90 and prohibits hatred from preventing justice in QS. Al-Mā'idah [5]:8. Justice becomes an ethical standard for assessing whether a *tafsir* is worth maintaining (Purnawan, 2025). If an interpretation produces subordination, neglect of rights, or symbolic violence against women, it must be re-examined through *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and *mubādalāh*. Duderija argues that contemporary Muslim reformist thought that affirms gender equality seeks to develop Islamic interpretations compatible with justice and ethical responsibility (Duderija, 2020, pp. 161-181).

The *mubādalāh* interpretation of *qawwāmūn*, *darajah*, testimony, and polygamy demonstrates a reorientation of meaning from status to function, from authority to responsibility, and from domination to partnership. Men and women are not placed in an upper-lower relation, but as subjects who equally bear moral responsibility. This reorientation is consistent with the principle of justice in QS. An-Naḥl [16]:90, respect for human dignity in QS. Al-Isrā' [17]:70, and reciprocal husband-wife relations in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:187.

In the issue of women's testimony, *mubādalāh* directs the reading from a claim of nature toward an analysis of social context. QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:282 should not be understood as a universal statement about women's intellectual quality. The verse is more appropriately read in the context of economic transactions that, at the time of revelation, were mostly managed by men. *Mubādalāh* examines interpretive outcomes through an operational question: does the meaning produced position women as rational, responsible, and trustworthy subjects, or does it perpetuate the stereotype that women are less rational (Mu'in et al., 2025)? If the purpose of the verse is to ensure clarity in transactions and prevent disputes, then in contemporary societies that provide women with educational and economic access, witness credibility should be linked to competence, integrity, and experience, not merely to sex. This reading does not erase the text but returns it to its moral purpose: justice, prudence, and protection of the rights of the parties involved in the transaction.

In the issue of polygamy, *mubādalāh* reads QS. An-Nisā' [4]:3 together with QS. An-Nisā' [4]:129 so that the ethical structure of the verses becomes visible. If QS. An-Nisā' [4]:3 mentions the possibility of polygamy in the context of protecting orphans and women, QS. An-Nisā' [4]:129 emphasizes human limitation in achieving perfect justice. A partial reading that highlights only the permissibility of polygamy produces formal legitimation, whereas an integrative reading places justice at the center of meaning. In the *mubādalāh* framework, justice does not only mean material maintenance, but also psychological security, dignity, consent, protection from violence, and the absence of exploitation of women. Nafi and Ali show that *mubādalāh* can become a method of gender-justice interpretation for religious court judges in deciding family law disputes because it connects text and lived reality to produce constructive meanings for relations between men and women (Nafi & Ali, 2024, pp. 137-158).

In the issue of polygamy, the contribution of *mubādalāh* lies in shifting the center of reading from formal permissibility to substantive justice. The main question is not simply whether polygamy is permitted, but whether the practice preserves women's dignity, protects children, prevents psychological violence, and guarantees relational justice. Thus, *mubādalāh* not only corrects *tafsir* but also encourages social transformation so that religion is not used to justify practices that harm women.

Mubādalāh also offers a methodological contribution because it is able to connect *tafsir*, *maqāṣid*, and social reality. The principle of reciprocity does not stand alone but works together with justice, public welfare, deliberation, and respect for human dignity. QS. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]:13 affirms that human dignity is not determined by sex but by piety. QS. Al-Isrā' [17]:70 affirms human dignity as such. QS. Ar-Rūm [30]:21 situates marriage within *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*. QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:187 describes husband and wife as garments for

one another. These principles form the foundation that family relations in Islam should not be built upon domination but upon protection, cooperation, and reciprocity. The article also positions *mubādalāh* as an analytical tool to distinguish the normative message of the Qur'an from *tafsir* constructions influenced by patriarchal culture (Nawawi & Sa'diyah, 2025).

The dialogue with previous studies indicates that this article both confirms and extends Islamic feminism and gender *tafsir* studies. It confirms Barlas's rejection of the assumption that the Qur'an is intrinsically patriarchal. It also extends Wadud by positioning women's experiences and Indonesian social realities as part of reading. It confirms Hasan et al. in critiquing patriarchal bias in interpretations of polygamy. It also extends Nafi and Ali by positioning *mubādalāh* not only as a tool for judges but also as an interpretive model for religious education, *pesantren*, Islamic preaching, family guidance, and renewal of family *fiqh* discourse. Thus, the contribution of this article lies not only in conceptual critique but also in the development of a reading model that can be translated into socio-religious spaces.

An Applicable *Mubādalāh*-Based Interpretive Model for Gender-Just Religious Understanding

The applicable interpretive model proposed in this article is constructed through three stages: historical contextualization, verification of the principle of justice, and social application. The first stage, historical contextualization, reads gender-related verses based on the social circumstances of revelation, Arabian family structures, economic relations, social protection practices, and the communal problems addressed by the text. This stage is important so that verses are not detached from the ethical and social reasons behind them. QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34, for instance, should not be read merely as a fixed rule of male leadership, but must be understood in the context of maintenance responsibility, social protection, and family structure during the period of revelation. QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:282 must be read in the context of economic transactions and women's social experience in commerce. QS. An-Nisā' [4]:3 must be read in the context of protecting orphans and women, not as a promotion of polygamy (Ibn 'Āshūr, 2006). This stage produces awareness that some *tafsir* is historical-contextual and not an untestable final norm (Al Mustaqim et al., 2025).

The second stage is verification of the principle of justice. Every *tafsir* must be tested against the Qur'an's fundamental values, especially justice, *rahmah*, public welfare, human dignity, and reciprocity. QS. An-Naḥl [16]:90 commands justice and goodness. QS. Al-Mā'idah [5]:8 affirms justice as a moral obligation even toward those who are disliked. QS. Al-Isrā' [17]:70 affirms human dignity. QS. Al-Anbiyā' [21]:107 positions the Islamic message as mercy for the worlds. Interpretations that produce violence, subordination, coercion, or the erasure of women's dignity must be reconsidered because they contradict this ethical orientation. This verification is not intended to subordinate the text to modern preference, but to ensure that *tafsir* does not deviate from the moral objectives of the Qur'an. In the *maqāṣid* approach, law and *tafsir* must be directed toward preserving welfare, preventing harm, and protecting human dignity (Ibn 'Āshūr, 2006, pp. 183-190; Auda, 2008, pp. 5-7).

The third stage is social application. The *mubādalāh* reading model cannot stop in the academic sphere because the problem of gender-biased *tafsir* operates within socio-religious spaces. The first application can be carried out in *pesantren* curricula and Islamic education through the teaching of gender-related *tafsir* that distinguishes between text, *tafsir*, *fiqh*, and culture. Students should be introduced to the plurality of *tafsir* so that they do not regard one interpretation as the only religious meaning. The second application can be conducted through training for religious counselors and preachers using family-sermon materials that emphasize shared responsibility, deliberation, anti-violence, and relational justice. The third application can be implemented in premarital guidance by inserting the principle of *mubādalāh* as a basis for husband-wife relations, so that obedience is not taught unilaterally but positioned within cooperation and reciprocal responsibility. The fourth application can

be used in rereading family *fiqh*, particularly issues of polygamy, maintenance, divorce, custody, and domestic violence, so that legal decisions become more sensitive to women's experiences and the principle of public welfare.

The applicable action of the *mubādalāh* model should be directed toward education, preaching, and Islamic family law. In education, gender-related *tafsir* can be taught by distinguishing revelation, *tafsir*, *fiqh*, and culture. In preaching, religious counselors and preachers need to emphasize shared responsibility, deliberation, anti-violence, and relational justice. In family law, *mubādalāh* can serve as an ethical consideration in cases of polygamy, divorce, maintenance, custody, and domestic violence. In this way, *tafsir* reconstruction does not stop as an academic idea but moves into social action (Ma'rifah et al., 2024).

Operationally, this model works through five analytical questions. First, what is the historical context of the verse and the social problem addressed by the text? Second, how have classical, modern, and contemporary *tafsir* works read the verse? Third, which aspects of the interpretation constitute the Qur'an's normative message and which are influenced by patriarchal social structures? Fourth, does the interpretive result position men and women as equal moral subjects? Fifth, how can the meaning of the verse be applied in family and social life in a just, reciprocal, and beneficial way? These five questions make *mubādalāh* an analytical procedure rather than a mere slogan of equality.

The model of reflection, interpretation, comparison, contribution, and action can be used as a practical device of *mubādalāh*. Reflection identifies the social impact of unequal *tafsir*. Interpretation reads verses based on context and moral objectives. Comparison juxtaposes classical, modern, feminist, *maqāṣid*, and *mubādalāh* interpretations. Contribution formulates more just and reciprocal meanings. Action translates interpretive outcomes into education, preaching, family guidance, and Islamic family law practice. Saerozi shows that *qirā'ah mubādalāh* is relevant to family issues and gender-responsive public policy because it connects textual reading with contemporary social needs (Saerozi, 2025).

This applicable model is also relevant to Islamic family law in Indonesia. In family cases, judges, religious counselors, marriage counselors, and religious educators often face issues that cannot be sufficiently answered through literal textual quotations. Domestic violence, polygamy, divorce, maintenance, and custody require readings that consider substantive justice. Nafi and Ali show that *mubādalāh* can become an alternative interpretive method for religious court judges so that family law decisions become more responsive to gender justice (Nafi & Ali, 2024, pp. 137-158). Thus, this article extends the significance of *mubādalāh* from *tafsir* to institutional practice. This contribution is important because the Journal of Islamic Mubādalāh is oriented toward human equality, partnership, collaboration, and social justice, so the reading model produced does not only answer academic problems but also social needs.

The main contribution of this model lies in its ability to integrate theological, methodological, and practical dimensions. Theologically, it returns relations between men and women to the values of justice, *rahmah*, deliberation, and human dignity. Methodologically, it distinguishes between the normative message of the Qur'an and *tafsir* shaped by patriarchal culture. Practically, it can be applied in education, preaching, family counseling, and Islamic family law. Therefore, the reconstruction offered is not abstract but has a clear implementative direction.

Based on the above discussion, the reconstruction of relations between men and women must be conducted proportionally. Classical *tafsir* tradition need not be rejected in total because it remains an important Islamic intellectual heritage. Nevertheless, parts of *tafsir* that emerged from patriarchal social structures need to be reread through the principles of justice, reciprocity, public welfare, and human dignity. Reconstruction does not mean replacing the Qur'an, but returning the reading of gender-related verses to the Qur'an's moral objectives. In this way, *mubādalāh* functions as a methodological framework that bridges text, tradition,

context, and the needs of contemporary Muslim societies. The result is a model of religious understanding that positions men and women as moral, spiritual, social, and familial partners equal in responsibility and honor.

Overall, mistaken interpretations of gender-related verses have serious implications for socio-religious life. Interpretive errors may shape hierarchical family relations, restrict women's participation, weaken women's position in decision-making, and provide religious legitimation for unjust practices. Therefore, *mubādalāh*-based rereading is important for connecting text, tradition, context, and social transformation. This approach positions men and women as equal moral subjects who share responsibility and jointly construct relations that are just, beneficial, and oriented toward *rahmah*.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Since it is based on library research, the analysis is limited to Qur'anic verses, classical and contemporary *tafsir* literature, academic books, journal articles, and studies related to gender justice, *mubādalāh*, and Islamic family law. It does not include empirical data obtained through interviews, field observation, or direct engagement with religious teachers, preachers, judges, family counselors, or Muslim families who experience the practical consequences of gender-biased interpretation in everyday life. Therefore, the findings should be understood as a conceptual and methodological contribution rather than an empirical measurement of how *mubādalāh*-based interpretation is received and practiced in specific socio-religious communities. Future research may develop this study through field-based inquiry in *pesantren*, religious courts, premarital guidance programs, Islamic preaching forums, and family counseling institutions in order to examine how reciprocal and gender-just interpretations are negotiated, accepted, resisted, or institutionalized in contemporary Muslim societies.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that several interpretations of Qur'anic verses concerning relations between men and women, particularly QS. An-Nisā' [4]:34, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:228, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:282, and QS. An-Nisā' [4]:3, have in certain reading traditions constructed gender relations that tend to be hierarchical. The main problem does not lie in the Qur'an as revelation, but in particular *tafsir* practices that separate verses from their socio-historical contexts, moral objectives, and the principle of justice that forms the foundation of Islamic teaching. The interpretation of *qawwāmūn* as absolute male authority, *darajah* as superiority, women's testimony as evidence of weaker reason, and polygamy as permissibility without sufficient emphasis on justice has contributed to socio-religious constructions that limit women's position in the family and public sphere.

The findings also affirm that *tafsir* bias does not remain in the textual domain but is reproduced in socio-religious discourse through sermons, popular *fiqh* books, religious education, and Muslim family practices. The implications of this reproduction appear in the strengthening of vertical husband-wife relations, the restriction of women's participation in decision-making, the normalization of unilateral obedience, and weak sensitivity toward women's experiences in issues of polygamy, divorce, maintenance, custody, and domestic violence. Therefore, critique of gender-biased *tafsir* must be conducted proportionally by distinguishing between the Qur'an, *tafsir*, *fiqh*, *hadith*, and patriarchal culture, so that the *tafsir* tradition is not rejected in its entirety but reread historically, methodologically, and ethically.

The *mubādalāh* perspective makes an important contribution to reconstructing relations between men and women from dominative patterns toward reciprocal, collaborative, and just relations. Through the principle of reciprocity, *mubādalāh* positions men and women as moral subjects who equally receive the ethical message of the Qur'an and share social, spiritual, and familial responsibility. In this framework, *qawwāmūn* is read as a function of responsibility

rather than superior status; *darajah* is understood as moral generosity and reconciliatory responsibility rather than ontological superiority; women's testimony is interpreted according to the socio-economic context of the verse; and polygamy is read through substantive justice rather than mere formal permissibility.

Thus, this study concludes that an applicable *mubādalah*-based interpretive model can serve as a methodological alternative for constructing gender-just religious understanding. The model operates through historical contextualization, verification of the principle of justice, and social application in religious education, *pesantren*, Islamic preaching, Muslim family guidance, and the development of Islamic family law. The reconstruction offered does not seek to replace religious texts but to return readings of gender-related verses to the Qur'an's moral objectives: justice, *rahmah*, public welfare, human dignity, and reciprocity. Accordingly, *mubādalah* may be positioned as both an analytical and practical framework for strengthening egalitarian, humane, and contextually relevant relations between men and women in contemporary Muslim societies.

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