



**The Defense of Women's Rights in QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 (Analysis
Asbāb al-Nuzūl in Tafsīr al-Qurthubī)**

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ABSTRACT :

QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 is verse that is often at the center of discussions about gender relations in Islam. This verse contains the concept of qawwamah, which is the responsibility of men over women, as well as the term daraba, which is often misunderstood as the role of women, and the term daraba, which is often misunderstood as a justification for domestic violence justification of domestic violence. This research aims to analyze women's rights and gender equality by examining the verse's Asbāb al-Nuzūl of this verse and the interpretation in Tafsīr al-Qurtubī. With qualitative method based on a literature study, this research explores the classical views in Tafsīr al-Qurtubī and contextualizes them in contemporary discourse on gender justice contemporary discourse on gender justice. The results of the study show that: 1) Asbāb al-Nuzūl QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 provides an overview about the transformation of Islam in improving gender relations that were previously dominated by the patriarchal system dominated by the patriarchal system. 2) Tafsīr al-Qurthubī interprets qawwamah as men's responsibility over women based on their financial role and protection in the household, while still prioritizing the values of justice protection in the household, but still prioritizes the values of justice and compassion and compassion. 3) The term daraba in this tafsir is understood as physical action that is very limited, but requires a re-reading to avoid interpretations that legitimize violence. This research confirms that Tafsīr al-Qurthubī, although rooted in the medieval context, has basic principles that can support the understanding of violence medieval context, has basic principles that can support an understanding of women's rights in Islam, such as of women's rights in Islam, such as justice, favorable treatment, and respect for women's dignity. This approach opens up space for a more contextual reinterpretation, making Islam a religion that emphasizes gender harmony, religion that prioritizes gender harmony and upholds human values humanity.

Key words: Asbāb al-Nuzūl, women's rights, gender equality

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an was revealed to humans as a guide to a bright and straight path, and to make humans as creatures who believe and live life in accordance with what Allah has commanded. The Qur'an also explains about the history of the past complete with how the attitude is done afterwards, about contemporary events, to the news that will occur in the future.¹

The verses in the Qur'an are generally divided into two types, first, verses that were revealed to provide guidance and guidance to humans without any particular cause, and

¹ Mannā Khalīl Al-Qaṭṭān, *Mabāhith Fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: Maktabah Wahdah, 2004), h. 2.

second, verses that were revealed due to a response to events and realities that occurred among the people where the Qur'an was revealed. This is as said by Imām Burhān al- Dīn bin 'Umar al-Ja'bariy quoted in the book by Muchlis M. Hanafī, that the Qur'an was revealed in two categories, some of which were revealed without a certain cause and others were revealed after certain questions or events.²

Judging from the number, the verses that were revealed without cause were more than the verses that were revealed for a certain reason. This shows that basically the Qur'an was revealed to be a guide and guide to life for humans without waiting for an event first, or a question to the Prophet Muhammad Saw. Meanwhile, the existence of events or questions that are the cause of the revelation of some verses of the Qur'an should be seen as an affirmation that the Qur'an was revealed as a guide in accordance with the needs and abilities of human life.³

On the other hand, although the number of verses that were revealed due to certain reasons is not much, scholars pay special attention to these verses with the discussion of *asbāb al-nuzūl* or the causes that led to the revelation of the verse of the Qur'an. *Asbāb al-nuzūl* then developed into one of the branches of al-Qur'anic science and received great attention from al-Qur'anic scholars and researchers. This science then becomes one of the important tools for anyone who wants to study the meaning of the Qur'an so that the meaning obtained is in accordance with the context and purpose of a verse of the Qur'an.⁴

Asbāb al-nuzūl is an important part of the tradition of interpreting the Qur'an from classical times. *Asbāb al-nuzūl* is used to explore information about the causes and causes of the Qur'anic verses. The historical background of the revelation of a verse of the Qur'an, and this is considered to help clarify the meaning and context of the application of the verse. However, in feminist interpretations, the approach to *asbāb al-nuzūl* has been questioned, especially when interpreted against verses about women. This is because *asbāb al-nuzūl* is framed within a patriarchal narrative that emphasizes women's subordination to men. A verse related to gender relations that is often used as a foundation to justify gender inequality in Muslim societies is QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 on male leadership over women.⁵

² Mukhlis M. Hanafī, *Asbab al-Nuzul: Kronologi Dan Sebab Turun Wahyu al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2017), h. 1.

³ Hanafī, *Asbab al-Nuzul: Kronologi Dan Sebab Turun Wahyu al-Qur'an*, h. 1.

⁴ Hanafī, *Asbab al-Nuzul: Kronologi Dan Sebab Turun Wahyu al-Qur'an*, h. 1.

⁵ Devi Rizki Apriliani et al., "Gender dalam Perspektif QS. An-Nisa Ayat 34," *Jurnal Riset Agama* 1, no. 3 (December 15, 2021): h. 531, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jra.v1i3.15129>.

الرَّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۗ
 فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنَاطٌ حَفِظَتْ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ
 فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۗ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلاً ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيماً كَبِيراً

Meaning: “The man (husband) is the protector of the woman (wife), because Allah has preferred some of them (men) over others (women), and because they (men) have provided from their wealth. So the virtuous women are those who obey Allah and guard themselves in the absence of their husbands, for Allah has guarded them. Those women whom you fear may be unfaithful, advise them, leave them in their beds, and (if necessary) beat . But if they obey you, then do not look for reasons to distress them. Indeed, Allah is the Most High, the Greatest”. (QS. al-Nisā’ [4]: 34).

QS. al-Nisā’ [4]: 34 is one of the most frequently discussed verses in Islamic studies related to gender relations, men's roles and women's rights. This verse contains a statement about men as leaders or protectors of women (qawwāmūn), and provides guidelines for husbands in dealing with household disharmony. The verse also contains principles that form the basis of the division of roles between men and women in the family, such as the husband's financial responsibility and the wife's obligation to obey her husband in matters that are not contrary to Islamic law.⁶

From a historical perspective, this verse was revealed against a certain background that gives context to its meaning. One of the famous asbāb al-nuzūl narrations is the case of Ḥabībah bint Zayd and her husband Sa'd ibn Rabi' who were involved domestic violence. Ḥabībah complained about her husband's actions to the Prophet, who initially decided on a qiṣāṣ sentence, but the decision was modified after the revelation of QS. al-Nisā’ [4]: 34. This verse is also associated with men's role as providers and protectors of women, which gives them a special responsibility in maintaining the stability of the household.⁷

In the context of interpretation, Imām al-Qurṭubī provides an in-depth explanation of this verse. He interpreted qawwāmūn as the responsibility of men to provide for, educate, and protect women. In addition, al-Qurṭubī emphasizes the importance of wives' obedience to their husbands, but with the limitation that such obedience should not contradict religious teachings. This interpretation provides an overview how Islam balances the rights and responsibilities between husband and wife in household relationships. Tafsir also explains

⁶ “Nuril Fajri, "Asma Barlas Dan Gender Perspektif Dalam Pembacaan Ulang QS. An-Nisa/4:34", *Aqlam: Jurnal of Islam and Plurality* 4, No. 2, (2019): h. 263.

⁷ Apriliani et al., “Gender dalam Perspektif QS. An-Nisa Ayat 34”, h. 532.

social facts about causes of violence, which are influenced by patriarchal culture, social structure, and prevailing norms. One of them is because pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arab society was very patriarchal, men had full authority over wives and families. Domestic violence was often seen as part of the husband's right to discipline his wife.⁸

In this study, researchers used *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī* because it is one of the classic tafsir works that provides an in-depth explanation of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* of this verse, as well as the views of Islamic law related to the rights and obligations of women in the household. This tafsir not only provides legal analysis, but also reflects the views of gender that developed in its day. It is suitable for gender analysis, Islamic law, or the study of social relations in classical Arab society, as well as relevant for discussion in a modern context.⁹

There are several previous studies that discuss *asbāb al-nuzūl* and gender equality, including research by Nur Isyanto entitled *Asbabun Nuzul in the Views of Classical and Contemporary Scholars in the adh-Dhiya Journal: Journal of al-Qur'an and Tafsir* explains that *asbāb al-nuzūl* is an important element in the tradition of al-Qur'an interpretation, both in the views of classical and contemporary scholars. In classical interpretation, *asbāb al-nuzūl* is seen as the key to understanding the historical context of the revelation of the Qur'anic verses. They use *asbāb al-nuzūl* to clarify the meaning of the verse, reduce ambiguity, and determine its application in certain situations. Meanwhile, according to contemporary scholars, the Quran dialogues with every era. So, the Quran, which is positioned as a text that crosses history, automatically has a historical role in the context of the past, and must be found relevant to what is happening in the present. The study of *asbāb al-nuzūl* should not only stop at the knowledge of the background of the emergence of the Quran. A verse or surah, but must be followed by the discovery of a new form of the problem that the Qur'an addresses in a contemporary setting.¹⁰

In addition, the results of research from Agus Setiawan, Hafid Nur Muhammad and Isti Khoiriah entitled *The Concept of Women's Leadership in QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 (Comparative Study of Tafsīr al-Jamī' Li Ahkām al-Qur'ān by Imām al-Qurṭubī and Tafsir Kebenci Karya Zaitunah Subhan)*. The context of leadership described in QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 is leadership in the household. In household life, it is essentially men who are more fit to lead.

⁸ Imām al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Penerj: Fathurrahman, Ahmad Hotib (Jakarta: Pustaka Azam, 2007), h. 591.

⁹ Isti Khoiriah, Agus Setiawan, and Hafid Nur Muhammad, "Konsep Kepemimpinan Wanita Dalam QS. An-Nisa Ayat 34 (Studi Komparatif Tafsīr al-Jamī' Li Ahkām al-Qur'ān Karya Imām al-Qurṭubī Dan Tafsir Kebencian Karya Zaitunah Subhan)," *Al Mubāfīdż: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsīr* 2, no. 2 (August 30, 2022), h. 190, <https://doi.org/10.57163/almuhafidz.v2i2.45>.

¹⁰ Nur Isyanto, "Asbabun Nuzul dalam Pandangan Ulama Klasik dan Kontemporer", *adh-Dhiya: Journal of Al-Qur'an and Tafsīr* 1, no. 1 (November, 2023): h. 45–60.

Seeing that Allah Swt. has created both men and women with His justice, by giving their respective natures and advantages. In this modern era, using QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 as an argument for prohibiting women from becoming leaders in the public sphere is not justified. This is because modern scholars allow women to be leaders, provided that they do not hold the highest power and are able to balance their public and domestic responsibilities. Imām al-Qurṭhubī is one of the classical mufassirs, where in his life there was no patriarchal culture that occurred in society. Thus, he tends to interpret this verse textually.¹¹

In this study, the author will analyze the *asbāb al-nuzūl* of QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 in depth using *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*. This research will not only explore how Imām al-Qurṭubī understands the background of the revelation of verse, but will also criticize his interpretation of gender relations and women's rights. This study is relevant to provide a new perspective in connecting classical tafsir with the needs of the times, especially in order to create equal relations between men and women in Islam.

Definition of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*

Asbāb al-nuzūl is composed of two words: *asbāb* and *nuzūl*. *Asbāb* is the plural of *sabab*, which means something that causes something else to exist. In Qur'anic terms, the word *sabab* or *asbāb* is also used to mean other things such as relationships, connecting ropes and doors. Meanwhile, *nuzūl* means falling from a high place. In the study of al-Qur'anic science, if the two words are combined, it will mean a branch of al-Qur'anic science that explains the events that caused the revelation of the verses of the Qur'an. In the book Muchlis M. Hanafi, several scholars explained the meaning of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, among others:

- a) Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī said that *asbāb al-nuzūl* is an event that occurred at a certain time or period and caused the revelation of one or more verses in the Qur'an.
- b) 'Abd al-Azīm al-Zarqanī said that *asbāb al-nuzūl* is an event that occurs at a certain time or period and causes one or more verses of the Qur'an to be revealed as an explanation of the content and explanation of the law related to an event
- c) Mannā Khalīl al-Qaṭṭān explains that *asbāb al-nuzūl* is something, either an event or a question that occurred at a certain time or period and is the cause of

¹¹ Khoiroh, Setiawan, and Muhammad, "Konsep Kepemimpinan Wanita dalam Qs. An-Nisa Ayat 34 (Studi Komparatif *Tafsir Al-Jami' Li Ahkam Al-Qur'an* Karya Imam al-Qurṭubī Dan Tafsir Kebencian Karya Zaitunah Subhan)", *al-Muhafidz: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 2, no. 2 (2022): 184-194.

the revelation of a verse of the Qur'an.¹²

Some other scholars also interpret *asbāb al-nuzūl* with the same meaning, both classical and contemporary scholars. Although the expression of the sentence varies, the meaning of the understanding is the same, namely referring to an event, word, or action that occurred at a certain time that was the background and cause of the revelation of a verse of the Qur'an. According to contemporary scholars, *asbāb al-nuzūl* is also seen as an important element in understanding the Qur'an, but the emphasis is more on a dynamic contextual and historical approach. These scholars tend to expand the scope of understanding *asbāb al-nuzūl* by considering a broader context that is relevant modern challenges and phenomena.¹³

In understanding *asbāb al-nuzūl*, there are two things that must be considered, first, the cause and appearance of a verse at the same time and period. An event can be considered *asbāb al-nuzūl* if the verse is an event that occurred within the time span of the Prophet's life. The time gap between the revelation of a verse and the event can occur directly in close proximity and can also occur in a relatively long time, but still within the lifetime and prophethood of the Prophet. Thus, events that occurred in previous nations before the Prophet Muhammad or stories that accompanied the life journeys of prophets before him cannot be considered *asbāb al-nuzūl*. Secondly, *asbāb al-nuzūl* can occur in two forms: an event that gets a direct explanation related to its law or from a question asked by the companions directly to the Prophet Muhammad *Saw*.¹⁴

The Urgency and Benefits of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*

Mannā Khalīl al-Qaṭṭān explains in his book about the urgency and benefits of *asbāb al-nuzūl* include:

1. To know the wisdom of the enactment of a law and the Shari'ah's attention to the public good in dealing with all events as a mercy for mankind regardless of gender, race and ethnicity.

Many Qur'anic verses deal with the social changes, laws, and policies of the Prophet Muhammad's time. The *asbāb al-nuzūl* provides context to understand how the Qur'an responds to these dynamics, as well as how these laws are implemented in society.

2. If the applicable law is general, then *asbāb al-nuzūl* can provide legal restrictions

¹² Hanafi, *Asbabun-Nuzul: Kronologi Dan Sebab Turun Wahyu al-Qur'an*, h. 4–7.

¹³ Nur Isyanto, "Asbabun Nuzul dalam Pandangan Ulama Klasik dan Kontemporer", *adb Diya: Journal of al-Qur'an and Tafsir* 1, no. 1, (2023): h. 54, <https://journal.stai-nuruliman.ac.id/index.php/adhy>.

¹⁴ Hanafi, *Asbabun-Nuzul: Kronologi Dan Sebab Turun Wahyu al-Qur'an*, 7–10.

according to the events that occurred when the verse was revealed.

In this context, *asbāb al-nuzūl* helps us understand that although a verse may seem to have a broad and universal scope, its application may be limited by the context of the event that triggered the revelation of the verse. This is to avoid mistakes in applying a law that was actually revealed for a specific context, but is understood too generally or out of context.

3. Knowledge of *asbāb al-nuzūl* can help a person to specialize the law which is limited to certain causes, especially for scholars who adhere to the rule of special causes.

Overall, knowledge of *asbāb al-nuzūl* serves to provide clear boundaries to the Qur'anic laws, so that their application becomes more appropriate and contextually relevant. This ensures that the law is not just taken literally, but also understood in terms of the underlying situation.

4. Can help uncover the hidden meaning in the Qur'an which is cannot be interpreted without looking at *asbāb al-nuzūl* first.

By understanding the context in which a verse was revealed, *mufasssirs* can interpret it more deeply and critically, and explore meanings that may not be apparent. It can also help identify the purpose behind the revelation of a Qur'anic verse. This allows the *mufasssir* to understand the moral or legal message being conveyed, which is not immediately apparent without the context.

5. By studying *asbāb al-nuzūl*, we can know who the verse was revealed to, so that there is no dispute.

Asbāb al-nuzūl provides an explanation of the event or situation that triggered the revelation of a particular verse. By understanding this context, the *mufasssir* can interpret the verse more accurately and avoid misunderstandings.¹⁵

Biography of Imām al-Qurṭubī and About Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī

Al-Qurṭubī's real name is Muḥammad bin Aḥmad bin Abū Bakr bin Farḥ al- Anṣari al-Khazrajī al-Qurṭubī. He was born in 580 AH in Qurthubah (Cordoba), one of the regions in Andalusia, so he is often known as al-Qurṭubī. He died in Shawwal of 671 AH. Al-Qurṭubī was a *mufasssir* whose knowledge was highly recognized by many scholars, so it is not surprising that he was nicknamed by many titles. Al-Ṣāḥibī gave him the title of being the imam who *mutqīn*, good memorization, sharp vision, very thorough. Not only is he regarded as a

¹⁵ Al-Qaṭṭān, *Mabāḥith Fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'an*, h. 96–100.

charismatic scholar, he is also regarded as a scholar who is not fanatical about his madhhab and even respects the various differences of opinion that exist.

From his extensive knowledge, he gave birth to many valuable papers, among some of these papers are 'Tafsīr al-Jamī' Li Ahkām al-Qur'ān, Qamh al-Birth bi al-Zuhd wa al-Qanā'ah, Tazkirah bi Ahwal al-Mauta wa al-Umūr al-Akhirah, and others. His expertise in various disciplines is inseparable from the contribution of his teachers, among his teachers are Ibn Rawāj, Ibn al-Jumaizi, al-Shaykh Abu al-Abbas Ahmad bin Umar al-Qurṭubī, Abu Ali al-Ḥasan bin Muhammad and many others. While his students are also very many including his own son, namely Shihabuddin Ahmad.

Al-Qurṭubī's contribution to the Islamic scientific tradition, especially in the world of interpretation of the Qur'an, cannot be doubted. Even the presence of his work of interpretation is very influential for the world of Islamic scholarship, so many scholars have praised the book of interpretation. Ibn Taimiyyah, for example, once praised with very appreciative praise, he stated that in the book of Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī there is a lot of goodness and his tafsir is the closest tafsir to ahlu kitab and sunnah and far from bid'ah things. So special is the book of Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, that many scholars who were born after him made it the main reference and even they made it a standard book that must be referred to. The tafsir al-Qurṭubī was first printed in Cairo in 1933-1950 AD by Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah in 20 volumes, then after that the publisher Muassisah al-Risalah Beirut in 2006 published it in 24 volumes complete with corrections (tahqiq) from Abdullah bin Muhsin al-Turki.

Regarding the book of Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, many scholars include this tafsir book in the fiqh-style tafsir, and the source of the tafsir is bi al-ra'yi. Indicators that are used as an argument for the conclusion are: First, the book of Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī is a book of interpretation that is thicker with fiqh style. Second, in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, the author often quotes the opinions of scholars as well as includes the hadith of the Prophet SAW, then at the end of the discussion he gives his own conclusions as a result of analyzing the ratio he did. So it can be stated that the source of Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī is bi al-ra'yi. However, based on the results of the author's analysis, the sources used as references and guidelines in his interpretation are not only bi al-ra'yi but also combined with bi al-ma'thūr interpretation sources (the Qur'an, the Prophet's sunnah, the opinions of the companions and the opinions

of the tabi'in) and then added to the history of asbāb al-nuzūl, Arabic poetry, qira'at, and the opinions of madzab scholars.¹⁶

Variations of Asbāb al-Nuzūl QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34

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

Meaning: “The man (husband) is the protector of the woman (wife), because Allah has preferred some of them (men) over others (women), and because they (men) have provided from their wealth. So the virtuous women are those who obey Allah and guard themselves in the absence of their husbands, for Allah has guarded them. Those women whom you fear may be unfaithful, advise them, leave them in their beds, and (if necessary) beat . But if they obey you, then do not look for reasons to distress them. Indeed, Allah is the Most High, the Greatest”. (QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34).

First, a narration states that this verse was revealed in connection with an incident involving an Anṣar couple, Sa'd ibn Rabī' and his wife, Habībah bint Zayd ibn Abī Hurayra. The story begins when Ḥabībah committed an act of nushūz against her husband, Sa'd ibn Rabī'. In response, her husband slapped her, causing her to bleed. Then Ḥabībah and her father went to the Prophet. Her father said: "O Messenger of Allah, should I separate her because he slapped her?" to which the Prophet said: "Let her return the same (qiṣāṣ) to her husband". Ḥabībah was ordered to repay her husband. However, as she was about to return with her father, the Prophet suddenly called her back, stating that Jibrīl had brought down the verse. In his words, the Prophet revealed that although he wanted an action, God wanted something better. Thus, the plan of retaliation (qiṣāṣ) was canceled.¹⁷

Men have the advantage of mental potential and a strong character that is not found in women. This is due to the nature of men who have a raging and hard spirit so that in him there is strength and firmness. Women, on the other hand, have a cool and cold nature, which means soft and weak, so Allah requires men to take care of them based on that. This verse shows the obligation of men to educate their wives, so that when the wives are already married,

¹⁶ Abdul Rohman, Ahmad Jalaluddin Rumi Durachman, and Eni Zulaiha, “Menelisis *Tafsīr al-Jāmi' Li Abkām al-Qurān* Karya al-Qurṭubī: Sumber, Corak dan Manhaj,” *Jurnal Kawakib* 3, no. 2 (December 30, 2022): 99–100, <https://doi.org/10.24036/kwkib.v3i2.70>.

¹⁷ Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, h. 591.

they will be able to take care of them. To safeguard the rights of husbands, it is not permissible for a man (husband) to mistreat his wife.

Secondly, among the women of Makkah, some of the wives showed a strict attitude towards their husbands, going against the tradition of obedience prevailing in a patriarchal society. According to al-Qurṭubī, this verse also explains the behavior of some wives in Makkah. The word *qawwām* is a form of hyperbole, which means taking care of something and organizing it based on consideration and taking care of it seriously. So, the responsibility of men over women based on this definition is that men act to organize and educate and keep women at home and prohibit them from showing themselves openly (*mejeng*). Women must obey and accept their husband's orders as long as they are not sinful. This is based on the virtue, livelihood, intellect and strength in matters of jihad, inheritance, commanding good and preventing evil.

When there is a wife who is *nushūz* to her husband, then she should advise him. If they do not improve, then the way to do that is to separate them, turn their backs on them and not mix with . If the two still do not get along, then the method is to separate them, turn their backs on them and not mix them. According to al-Qurṭubī, this is a good opinion, because if the husband turns away from his wife's bed (does not have intercourse with her), then if the wife loves her husband, it will make him difficult so that he will return to make up, and if he hates him, there will be opposition from the wife, so it will appear that the opposition comes from the wife's side.

If that does not work, then spanking should be used, because that is what will correct her and encourage her to fulfill her husband's rights. The spanking here is a spanking for education, not a spanking that is painful, does not break bones and does not cause injuries such as punching and the like, because the aim is to correct, not something else. An example of this is hitting the wife on the shoulder three times with the hand, with a miswak, or with a flexible wood. In addition, the husband should not say or do anything bad to his wife. This is a prohibition of mistreating the wife after establishing the virtues of the wife and educating her. If the unfaithful wife returns to her husband, the husband is obliged to provide for her in the , because the wife's maintenance is not interrupted for any reason other than *nushūz*, whether it is due to sickness, menstruation, postpartum bleeding, fasting, Hajj, the departure of the husband, and the husband's detention of the wife in his house.¹⁸

Gender Equality in Modern Interpretation

¹⁸ Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, h. 391–405.

Gender equality refers to the achievement of equal conditions for women and men in acquiring their rights and opportunities as individuals. This enables them to contribute in various fields such as development, politics, economy, social, culture, education, defense and security. This concept is also known as sex equality or sexual equality, which asserts that women and men should be treated equally and should not be subjected to discrimination based on sex, unless there are biological reasons that justify different treatment.¹⁹

Gender equality refers to a process and fair treatment of women and men. This concept includes the elimination of role restrictions, double burden, subordination, marginalization, and violence against both sexes. Gender equality and justice are realized when there is no discrimination between women and men, allowing them to have access, opportunities to participate, and control over development, as well as obtaining equal and fair benefits from the development process. The position and role of women in Islam is actually very honorable and noble. Mahmud Syaltut as quoted by M. Quraish Shihab in a journal by Nuril Fajri, explained that the human nature between men and women is almost the same. Allah has bestowed potential to women as well as men. They are given sufficient potential and ability to assume, which makes them able to carry out activities that are general and specific.²⁰

In QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34, Asma Barlas highlights one aspect that she believes has the potential to lead to patriarchal understanding, namely the husband's right to beat his wife when she disobeys (*nushūz*). According to her, as quoted from Amina Wadud's *Qur'an And Women*, the word *ḍaraba* can not only be interpreted as hitting, but can also be interpreted as a lesson. Surely Barlas realizes that if this right is used as a reference in Muslim family life from the Qur'an, it is very incorrect and irrelevant to the concept of equality in the Qur'an. The understanding propagated by this verse is also highlighted by the Muslim minority in the UK. They are convinced that the act of wife-beating in domestic life is extremely cruel and irrelevant to the teachings of Islam. It cannot be legalized despite the many narrations that allow it through Islamic doctrine.

Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that Barlas's interpretation on *nushūz* is more consistent with the historical context of the verse. The verse was revealed in the context of a patriarchal pre-Islamic Arab society, where men had more power than women. However, the verse also emphasizes that men and women have equal rights and obligations.

¹⁹ Naela Madhiya, "Perspektif Gender Dalam Tafsir Kontemporer", Tesis, Pascasarjana Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an, (2021), h. 27.

²⁰ "Nuril Fajri, 'Asma Barlas Dan Gender Perspektif Dalam Pembacaan Ulang QS. An-Nisa/4:34', *Aqlam: Jurnal of Islam and Plurality* 4, No. 2, (2019): 263.

One of the subjects of his criticism is the meaning of the word *qawwāmūn* which in classical books is interpreted as leader, which makes the understanding that men are given the right to lead women. Of course, this is rejected by Barlas. He quotes from Pitchkall who states that *qawwāmūn* terminologically means seeker breadwinners or those charged with the obligation to provide the means of life.

Barlas says that the verse should be read as guiding the obligation imposed on men to provide for women with their economic abilities, not the right given to lead as understood by classical interpretations. Barlas also concludes that this verse does not give rights to men, either the right to beat or lead, but rather this verse demands the obligation of men to teach their wives, and make a living for them. From this it can be concluded that *qawwāmūn* is more in line with Islamic teachings on Islamic equality, which teaches that men and women are equal and equal creatures before God. Barlas' interpretation of *qawwāmūn* emphasizes equality and shows that both men and women can play the role of provider and protector.²¹

According to Wahbah al-Zuhaili, the man is the leader in the family and It is the husband's duty to warn the woman (wife) if her attitude and behavior deviate. So if women (wives) go beyond the rules of married life so that they disregard the rights and obligations of the family, a husband is obliged to take the following steps: First, advise and remind her if this method strikes a chord in her heart. Secondly, separation from bed. This means not having intercourse with the wife or not sleeping in the same bed. Third, hitting with a blow that does not hurt. This means a light blow that does not hurt and does not harm. For example, hitting the wife on the shoulder three times with the hand, with a miswak, or with a flexible wood. The beating should be light because the intention is to remind the wife to return to good behavior, not for any other purpose.²²

While many have interpreted this verse as a verse about male leadership, there are many others who have interpreted this verse as a verse about male leadership. Zaitunah Subhan explains in her book quoted in Siti Robikah's journal, that according to her this verse does not actually talk about leadership but the problem of violence committed by husbands against their wives. According to her, it is not right if this verse is used as a legitimization of male leadership over women. In the Qur'an and hadith there is not a single verse that prohibits women from becoming leaders, both domestic and public. Zaitunah explained that this verse was revealed in a context where there was no understanding of equality between men and women. Therefore, if we look back at QS. al-Nisa [4]: 34, which states that the advantages of

²¹ Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of The Qur'an*, (Amerika: University of Texas Press, 2002), h. 87-89.

²² Al-Zuhaili, *Tafsir al-Munir*, h. 235.

men over women are functional, not gender advantages. This verse is not normative but contextual.²³

Analysis of Women's Rights according to QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34

Women's rights are one of the issues that often receive attention, especially in relation to QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34. This verse explicitly discusses the relationship between men and women in the household, including men's responsibilities as leaders (qawwām), women's rights as protected parties, and conflict resolution mechanisms. The following is an analysis of women's rights in the verse:

1. Economic Rights (Right to be Provided for)

This verse states that men have financial responsibility over women. The phrase "*and because they have spent some of their wealth*", emphasizes the husband's obligation to fulfill the economic needs of his wife and family. In Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, this point is seen as a form of protection for women, where women are not burdened with the responsibility of earning a living. Women have full rights to the livelihood given by their husbands without the obligation to reuse it for the family. This right puts women in an economically protected position.²⁴

2. Spiritual Rights (Right to Obey God)

Salīḥah woman is one who obeys Allah and her husband, taking care of herself, her husband's rights and the household when he is away, because Allah has taken care of them. Allah's care for wives includes preserving the love of her husband when he is away, with a love that is born out of the husband's trust in his wife. This is because not all wives are obedient to Allah, and neither are husbands, so this verse provides guidance to husbands on how to behave and act towards a disobedient wife. Do not let the defiance continue and the husband also does not overdo it in acting so that it results in the collapse of the household. However, these traits are not exclusive to women. In the moral and spiritual context, classical tafsir places women as partners of men in creating a harmonious household.²⁵

3. Right to Gender Equality

²³ Siti Robikah, "Penafsiran Ulang QS. An-Nisa [4]: 34 dalam Perspektif *Tafsir Maqāṣid*", *al-Dhikra: Jurnal Studi Qur'an dan Hadis* 4, no. 1 (2022): 55.

²⁴ Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsir al-Qurṭubī*, h. 400.

²⁵ Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an Jilid 2*, h. 104.

Contemporary mufassirs such as Asma Barlas, Riffat Hassan, and Fazlur Rahman reject the idea that qawwamah gives men absolute superiority over women. They see this verse as an arrangement of responsibility, not superiority. Qawwamah does not mean men are always superior, but describes the division of tasks based on ability and responsibility. Gender equality is realized in women's right to actively participate in family decision-making. Asma Barlas argues that the Qur'an does not support patriarchy. Instead, it calls for justice and respect for women, especially within the family structure.²⁶

4. Right to Protection from Violence

In Islam, violence against women is considered a form of deviance. In the life history of the Prophet Muhammad Saw., there is not a single narration that shows that he condoned violence against his wife or women. Women have the right to be treated with respect and dignity, both within the household and society. Violence in the form of physical, verbal or emotional abuse goes against this value. Men as qawwāmūn have an obligation to protect their wives and ensure their well-being. Male leadership means providing security, both physically and emotionally, to women in the household.²⁷

Conclusion

Asbāb al-nuzūl QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 describes the patriarchal social conditions of pre-Islamic Arab society, where women were often subjected to discrimination and violence. Islam came to bring about a gradual transformation by establishing new norms that protected women's rights, including an emphasis on men's responsibility as qawwām and the prohibition of oppression. Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī provides a traditional interpretation of this verse that reflects the social and cultural context of its time. In his tafsīr, qawwamah is interpreted as men's leadership over women based on financial responsibility and domestic roles. However, this interpretation recognizes the importance of justice and good treatment of women, as exemplified by the Prophet.

QS. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 emphasizes the importance of responsibility, justice, and compassion in gender relations, especially in the household. By understanding asbāb al-nuzūl and traditional commentaries such as Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī in a contextualized framework, this verse can provide balanced guidance between rights and responsibilities, while preventing

²⁶ Fajri, "Asma Barlas Dan Gender Perspektif Dalam Pembacaan Ulang QS. An-Nisa/4:34", h. 29.

²⁷ Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, h. 503.

violence and discrimination against women. This interpretation becomes the foundation for strengthening the position of women in Islam, without ignoring the universal values of justice taught by the Qur'an.

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