



REFORMULATING GENDER EQUALITY AS A RESPONSE TO CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PRESSURES (AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF THE QUR'AN SURAH AN-NISA 4:34)

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Abstract

The phenomenon of the rising number of divorces filed by women in Central Kalimantan in 2024, reaching approximately 79% of all divorce cases, reflects a collective social pressure and gender imbalance within the institution of marriage. This article aimed to reinterpret the meaning of gender equality in the Qur'anic exegesis of Surah An-Nisa' verse 34 through the lens of modern-contemporary interpretation, employing the *Maqasid Al-Syari'ah* and *Ma'na Cum Maghza* approaches. This article adopted a qualitative literature review method, drawing data from modern and contemporary tafsir works, scholarly articles, and empirical data from the Central Bureau of Statistics. The content analysis revealed that the term *qawwamun* in the verse signifies moral trust and social responsibility with a protective nature. This rereading shifted the patriarchal paradigm toward an egalitarian partnership between men and women within the family and broader contemporary social systems. The novelty of this study lay in the integration of tafsir analysis with contemporary social phenomena and the application of the *Ma'na Cum Maghza* approach to reformulate a gender-equality interpretation grounded in justice, collective well-being, and the *maqasid*-based relevance of Islamic teachings to modern social issues.

Keywords: Gender equality, Surah An-Nisa:34, *Maqasid Al-Syari'ah* and *Ma'na Cum Maghza*, modern-contemporary exegesis.

Abstrak

Fenomena meningkatnya angka cerai gugat oleh perempuan di Kalimantan Tengah tahun 2024, yang mencapai sekitar 79% dari total kasus perceraian, menunjukkan adanya tekanan kolektif dan ketimpangan relasi gender dalam institusi perkawinan. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kembali makna kesetaraan gender dalam tafsir Al-Qur'an Surah An-Nisa:34 melalui perspektif tafsir modern-kontemporer dengan pendekatan *Maqasid Al-Syari'ah* dan *Ma'na Cum Maghza*. Artikel ini menggunakan metode kualitatif jenis studi kepustakaan (*library research*), dengan sumber data berupa karya tafsir modern-kontemporer, artikel ilmiah, serta data empiris dari Badan Pusat Statistik. Hasil analisis isi menunjukkan bahwa istilah *qawwamun* dalam ayat, bermakna amanah moral dan tanggung jawab sosial yang bersifat protektif. Penafsiran ulang ini mengubah pola pikir patriarkal menjadi hubungan kemitraan yang seimbang antara laki-laki dan perempuan dalam kehidupan keluarga maupun tatanan sosial kontemporer. Novelty artikel ini, terletak pada integrasi analisis tafsir dengan fenomena sosial kontemporer serta penerapan pendekatan *Ma'na Cum Maghza* untuk membangun reformulasi tafsir kesetaraan gender yang berorientasi pada keadilan, kesejahteraan kolektif, dan relevansi *maqasidi* terhadap isu sosial modern.

Kata Kunci: Kesetaraan gender, Surah An-Nisa:34, *Maqasid Al-Syari'ah*, *Ma'na Cum Maghza*, tafsir modern-kontemporer.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Women's well-being is an increasingly important issue in modern society, particularly in Muslim countries. In Indonesia, particularly in Central Kalimantan, in 2024, recorded divorce figures showed that approximately 79% of the total 3,040 divorce cases were filed by women¹. A study found that divorce is not only caused by individual differences but also by collective pressures that disrupt marital balance².

The phenomenon of collective pressure can be seen in several factors, firstly, Low education of the spouse affects thinking, emotional, and life skills. External factors include easy access to the courts, third-party interference, religious legitimacy, and weak premarital education. Common reasons for divorce are usually arguments, economic problems, domestic violence, infidelity, and forced marriage. However, fundamentally, the cause lies in weak communication, understanding of roles, and the inability to meet economic needs³. Systemic phenomena that include educational, economic, patriarchal cultural factors, and weak awareness of gender equality in society indicate that women's welfare issues need to be understood through a broader approach, namely the *maqasid* approach that is oriented towards collective interests and social justice.

Jasser Auda stated that modern scholars have expanded the *maqasid*, which was perceived as solely oriented toward the individual, without addressing collective interests such as the community, the nation, and humanity at large. This thinking aligns with modern and contemporary thinkers, as Jasser Auda explains: *Ibn Ashur, prioritized maqasid related to the welfare of the ummah (nation) over those focused on individuals. Rashid Rida incorporated elements of "reform" and "women's rights" into his maqasid framework. Similarly, Yusuf al-Qaradawi emphasized "human dignity and rights" as a central component of his maqasid theory*⁴.

It is understood that the phenomenon of divorce rates, particularly those filed by women, reflects structural and collective issues within the institution of marriage.

¹ Badan Pusat Statistik Kalimantan Barat, "Nikah Dan Cerai Menurut Kabupaten/Kota (Kejadian) Di Provinsi Kalimantan Barat, 2024," Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Kalimantan Barat (palangka raya, 2025), <https://kalteng.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/3/VkhwVUszTXJPVmQ2ZFRKamNIZG9RMVo2VEdsbVVUMDkjMw==/nikah-dan-cerai-menurut-kabupaten-kota-kejadian-di-provinsi-kalimantan-tengah--2024.html>.

² Mufid Arsyad and A. Kumedi Ja'far, "Penyebab Kasus Cerai Gugat," *Al-Sulthaniyah* 14, no. 2 (2025): 211–22, <https://doi.org/10.37567/al-sulthaniyah.v14i2.3331>.

³ Maimun Maimun, Mohammad Toha, and Misbahul Arifin, "FENOMENA TINGGINYA ANGKA CERAI-GUGAT DAN FAKTOR PENYEBABNYA: Analisis Reflektif Atas Kasus-Kasus Perceraian Di Madura," *Islamuna: Jurnal Studi Islam* 5, no. 2 (2019): 157, <https://doi.org/10.19105/islamuna.v5i2.2105>.

⁴ JASSER AUDA, "The 'Imams of Maqāṣid' (Fifth To Eighth Islamic Centuries)," *Maqasid Al-Shariah*, 2019, 17–22, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvkc67c6.5>.

Collective pressures stem from both internal and external factors. This situation demonstrates that women's welfare issues cannot be viewed solely as individual issues but require a multidisciplinary approach *maqasid* broader and more universal, oriented towards collective interests.

We can see this criticism of collective pressure from the thoughts of Rasyid Ridha, who explains how the structural and collective problems of the Arab Jahiliyah considered women as inheritance.

وكانت المرأة في الجاهلية لا تُعطى حقوقها، بل كانت تُعد من جملة الأموال الموروثة، فجاء الإسلام فألقدها من تلك الحالة، ورفع منزلتها، وجعل لها من الحقوق ما لم يكن لها من قبل، وساواها بالرجل في كثير من الأحكام والمعاملات⁵

Based on this description, this article aims to analyze how gender welfare is reformulated in the study of Qur'anic interpretation by contemporary modern commentators through the Maqasid al-Syari'ah framework. With the question, *How is the reformulation of the concept of gender equality in the interpretation of the Qur'an according to the thoughts of modern-contemporary interpreters as a response to collective pressures that influence the high number of divorce lawsuits by women?*

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This article uses a qualitative method in the form of a literature review (*library research*) using a modern-contemporary interpretation approach. The research data sources consist of interpretation works, journal articles, academic books, statistical reports, and official webpages containing normative information and empirical data on the phenomenon of women suing for divorce in Central Kalimantan. The empirical data are analyzed descriptively to identify forms of social pressure, which are then contextualized with the messages of the verses using the Ma'na Cum Magha approach. The analysis was carried out through the Maqasid al-Syari'ah framework and the Ma'na Cum Maghza approach, which includes tracing the historical meaning of the verse. (*al-ma'na al-tarikhi*), the main message of the verses of the Qur'an (*al-maghza al-tarikhi*), and reconstruction of dynamic significance (*al-maghza al mutaharrik*) for the contemporary social context. Data were analyzed descriptively and analytically to formulate a concept for reformulating gender welfare as a response to collective pressures that cause high divorce rates.

5 محمد عبده، "تفسير القرآن الحكيم المنار الجزء الرابع"، 1931⁵

C. RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Interpreting the Qur'an using a hermeneutic approach allows the interpreter to explore the deeper meaning of the text, including in terms of current gender issues⁶. Understanding women's welfare can be seen from various perspectives, including basic rights, protection against violence, and participation in decision-making.

The contextual interpretation approach plays a crucial role in interpreting verses related to women and gender issues, as well as understanding their application in the context of modern life⁷. Thus, an interpretation based on universal social and cultural goals will be more relevant and can provide solutions to the problems faced by women today. The contemporary modern interpretation methodology in understanding the text of the Qur'an focuses not only on linguistic aspects but also on the historical and social contexts underlying the revelation⁸, which in Sahiron's methodological steps is known as the Islamic approach. *Ma'na Cum Maghza*, namely, historical meaning (al-ma'na al-tarakhi), (2) historical phenomenal significance (al-maghza al-tarikhi), and (3) dynamic phenomenal significance (al-maghza al-mutaharrik) for the context in which the text of the Qur'an is interpreted.

The first exploration, which explores the historical meaning (al-ma'na al-tarakhi), focuses on the circumstances under which the text was revealed, encompassing the social, political, and cultural norms of the time. For example, understanding the background to the revelation of verses on women's rights in pre-Islamic Arabia and during the prophetic period. This is found in Surah An-Nisa: 34. *Men are the guardians of women because Allah has made some of them excel others and because they spend out of their wealth. So the righteous women are those who are obedient (to Allah) and guard themselves in their absence because Allah has guarded them. As for those women whose lewdness you fear, then advise them, separate them in bed, and beat them (with a mild beating). But if they obey you, then do not seek a way to trouble them. Indeed, Allah is High, Great*⁹. Some traditions state that this verse was revealed in connection with the case of a man from the Anshar who slapped his wife. The wife then took the matter to the Prophet and demanded punishment *qishash* for her husband's actions. Initially, the Prophet ordered the implementation of *qisas*. However, before *qisas* was carried out, Gabriel descended to deliver the revelation of Surah al-Nisa: 34. This verse then explains the basis of male leadership in the household, namely because of the responsibility for providing for and the social protection function

⁶ M N Hakim and A Kholid, "Reposisi Dialektis Tafsir Lughawi: Pergeseran Integratif Pendekatan Linguistik Dalam Wacana Tafsir Kontemporer," *Researchgate.Net*, n.d., https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Muhammad-Hakim-64/publication/366740532_Reposisi_Dialektis_Tafsir_Lughawi_pergeseran_integratif_pendekatan_linguistik_dalam_wacana_tafsir_kontemporer/links/63b173c6a03100368a45bcb5/Reposisi-Dialektis-Tafsir-Lughawi-per.

⁷ R Zahra, M H Khusnadin, and A A Fitra, "Studi Komparatif Tafsir Tekstual Dan Tafsir Kontekstual Dalam Pemahaman Ayat-Ayat Sosial Di Era Modern," ...: *Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an, Tafsir ...*, 2025, <http://ejournal.iaifa.ac.id/index.php/takwiluna/article/view/1943>.

⁸ M Muallifah, K Samosir, and ..., "Metodologi Tafsir Modern-Kontemporer Di Indonesia," ... *Ilmu Al Quran Dan Tafsir*, 2022, <http://ejournal.iai-tabah.ac.id/Alfurqon/article/view/1401>.

⁹ Yayasan Penyelenggara Penterjemah Al-Qur'an, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya*, Keempat (Bandung: Sinar Baru Algensindo Bandung, 2013).

assigned to him, and provides hierarchical guidance in dealing with potential *nusyuz*¹⁰.

Second, the significance of the main message of the Qur'anic verses (*al-maghza al-tarikhi*) emphasizes the historical impact of the text. This includes how the verses have influence the lives of women throughout history, and how understanding of the text has evolved over time. For example, in Surah An-Nisa: 34, *Men are the leaders (responsible) for women because Allah has made some of them excel others and because they (men) have spent part of their wealth....*¹¹. *Al-maghza al-tarikhi* In Surah An-Nisa: 34, the main message of the verse is not a prohibition on women becoming leaders, but rather that if someone wants to become a leader in any form, they must have advantages, both in terms of knowledge, religiosity and financial capabilities¹².

Third, dynamic phenomenal significance (*al-maghza al-mutaharrik*) relates to the application of the text in the current context. This is crucial to ensuring that the teachings of the Qur'an remain relevant and applicable in everyday life. Aulia Nisaa'i Rosyida et al., cited Nasaruddin Umar's opinion, state that the phrase *arrijalu qawwamuna 'alan-nisa'* cannot be used as a basis for men being superior to women, but rather the verse emphasizes the obligation of men to be protective and responsible as head of the family¹³.

In Central Kalimantan, the most prominent cause of divorce cases is constant disputes and arguments, with a total of 2,310 cases or about three-quarters of the total divorces. The second major cause is abandonment of one of the parties with 495 cases, indicating irresponsibility in the marital relationship, both emotionally and physically. Economic factors also play a significant role with 178 cases, reflecting household financial pressure as one of the triggers of conflict. Other factors, although smaller in number, include domestic violence with 35 cases, drunkenness with 37 cases, imprisonment with 32 cases, and polygamy with 18 cases. Several additional factors such as narcotics/drugs with 5 cases, gambling with 9 cases, physical disability with 8 cases, forced marriage with 7 cases, and apostasy/conversion with 11 cases were also recorded but in relatively low numbers¹⁴. This data shows that relationship problems and responsibilities in the household are still the main root of divorce in Central Kalimantan. The decision to divorce cannot be separated from various influencing factors, such as the experience of suffering due to domestic violence and the existence of social support from the surrounding environment¹⁵.

¹⁰ Al-Wahidi an-Nisaburi, *Al-Qur'an, Asbabun Nuzul Sebab Turunya Ayat-Ayat*, 2024.

¹¹ Yayasan Penyelenggara Penterjemah Al-Qur'an, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya*.

¹² Sahiron Syamsuddin - Abdul Muiz Amir - Muh. Muads et al., *PENDEKATAN MA'NA-CUM-MAGHZA ATAS AL-QUR'AN DAN HADIS: MENJAWAB PROBLEMATIKA SOSIAL KEAGAMAAN DI ERA KONTEMPORER*, n.d.

¹³ Aulia Nisaa'i Rosyida, Andri Nirwana AN, and Rezaul Islam, "The Role of the Ma'nā Maghẓā Approach and Maqāshidī Tafsir in Efforts to Contextualize the Meaning of the Qur'an in the Contemporary Era," *Solo International Collaboration and Publication of Social Sciences and Humanities* 4, no. 01 (2025): 13–28, <https://doi.org/10.61455/sicopus.v4i01.371>.

¹⁴ BPS, "Jumlah Perceraian Menurut Provinsi Dan Faktor," 2024.

¹⁵ Jurnal Empati, Nadya Ridha Rachmatunisa, and Amalia Rahmandani, "APAKAH AKU MASIH MEMILIKI HARAPAN? STUDI KUALITATIF FENOMENOLOGI PENGALAMAN IBU KORBAN KDRT HINGGA MEMUTUSKAN BERCERAI" 13 (2024): 63–69.

Discussion

This section discusses the reformulation of the concept of gender equality in the interpretation of the Qur'an according to the thoughts of modern-contemporary interpreters as a response to collective pressures that influence the high number of divorce cases in the contemporary era based on the Qur'an Surah an-Nisa: 34,

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالْكَافَّةُ غُنَتْ عَنْهُنَّ ۚ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانُ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

Translation: Men are the guardians of women because Allah has made some of them excel others and because they spend out of their wealth. So the righteous women are those who are obedient (to Allah) and guard themselves in their absence because Allah has guarded them. As for those women whose lewdness you fear, then advise them, separate them in bed, and beat them (with a mild beating). But if they obey you, then do not seek a way to trouble them. Indeed, Allah is High, Great¹⁶

A word "qawwama" in Arabic comes from the word "qama" which means standing. The plural is "al-qiyam/qawwama", is the name for something that can be used as a place to stand or grow by something else. Al-'Asham said that its meaning is always standing and will never be replaced¹⁷. "al-Qiyam" Muhammad Abduh, as quoted by Rashid Rida, states that women naturally play a greater role in receiving and managing their husbands' gifts. However, this should not be interpreted as legitimizing men's arbitrary behavior or restricting their wives' freedom. A husband's leadership in the household is a moral mandate and responsibility, not a form of oppression. The husband acts as a guide and director in running family affairs, while the wife retains her freedom and an active role in maintaining household harmony. As stated in Tafsir Al-Manar,

المراد بالقيام هنا هو الرئاسة، يتصرف فيها المروءوس بإرادته واختياره، وليس معناها أن يكون المروءوس مقهوراً¹⁸

Understood, meaning al-qiyam (guardianship) In this verse, the responsibility to protect the household emphasizes an attitude of moderation. (al-qisth) not authoritarian (maqhuran), Abdullah Naeim and Mahmud stated, *The application of Ustadh Mahmoud's evolutionary principle to male Qawama (guardianship) over women has already been explained. Male guardianship over women has been rationalized by Surah An-Nisa:34 as following from the economic and security dependence of women on men. Because such dependence is no longer necessarily true, argued Ustadh Mahmoud, male guardianship over women should be terminated. Both men and women should now enjoy free and equally responsible before the law, which guarantees economic opportunity and security for all members of the community¹⁹. An-Naeim made the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

¹⁶ Yayasan Penyelenggara Penterjemah Al-Qur'an, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya*.

¹⁷ Ar-Raghib Al-Ashfahani, *Al-Mufradat Fi Gharib Al-Qur'an: Kamus Al-Qur'an Jilid 3*, Terj. Ahmad Zain Dahlan, 2017.

¹⁸ Muhammad Rasyid Rida, "Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Hakim Al-Masyhur Bi Tafsir Al-Manar," *Juz V*, Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah, 1999.

¹⁹ 'Abd Allah Ahmad Na'im, *Toward an Islamic Reformation : Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law* (Syracuse, N.Y. : Syracuse University Press, 1946), <https://archive.org/details/towardislamicref00naim/page/181/mode/1up>.

a powerful instrument to protect the glory, honor, and dignity of every human being on Earth²⁰

This idea can be seen in how the Qur'an emphasizes the importance of protecting and respecting women in the previous verse, namely, Surah An-Nisa: 32-33, Allah says about the importance of justice and fair distribution of inheritance between genders. This confirms that the Qur'an recognizes women's economic rights. They are not positioned merely as objects, but as subjects who have rights and responsibilities in various areas of life²¹. In Muhammad Abduh's explanation, men's natural disposition is given advantages over women in several qualities that support the responsibility of household leadership, such as physical strength, broad insight, the ability to earn a living and bear financial burdens²². Thus, the Qur'an Surah An-Nisa: 34, is not only a matter of leadership between men and women. The main message of the verse is a system of justice, equality, responsibility (*amanah*), the prohibition of committing injustice which in the context of the revealed verse, is a symbol "*qawwamun*" "*majaz aqli ma'nawi*"²³, whose main message is as a person of social and moral responsibility²⁴.

Realizing responsibility (*al-amanah*), justice, equality, for humans, Jasser Auda formulated six interrelated system approaches, including, *cognitive nature of systems, wholeness, openness, interrelated hierarchy, multi-dimensionality, and purposefulness*²⁵. Auda's proposals for the development of Islamic law, such as justice and gender welfare rights, are not only based on Islamic jurisprudence and *ushul fiqh*, but also utilize various theories from other disciplines, such as *hadith*, *tafsir*, cognitive theory, classification theory, systems theory, philosophy, and other similar fields²⁶. Thus, Auda critiques *maqasid* traditional, First, *maqasid* It does not encompass the specific objectives of certain verses or laws in Islamic jurisprudence. Second, its focus is still limited to the individual, not the family, society, or humanity in general. Third, the traditional classification does not incorporate universal values such as justice and freedom, which are fundamental principles of the Islamic worldview. Fourth, *maqasid* Traditional jurisprudence is concluded mainly from *fiqh* literature (*fatwas*), not directly from the primary sources of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*²⁷.

D. CONCLUSION

²⁰ Arman Budiman, "TEOLOGI ISLAM DAN HAK ASASI MANUSIA DALAM PEMIKIRAN ABDULLAH AHMED AN-NA'IM," *Rausyan Fikir: Jurnal Ilmu Studi Ushuluddin Dan Filsafat* (IAIN Palu, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.24239/rsy.v20i2.1685>.

²¹ A A Engineer, *Tafsir Perempuan: Wacana Perjumpaan Al-Qur'an, Perempuan, Dan Budaya Kontemporer* (books.google.com, 2022), <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=EzVnEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA6&dq=tafsir+modern+tafsir+kontemporer&ots=2o5LaPbp22&sig=kBRk6nMGfAuLI8TkBJjneIY4FMA>.

²² Rida, "Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Hakim Al-Masyhur Bi Tafsir Al-Manar."

²³ Dr. Yasir Qadhi, *The Parables of the Qur'an*, 2022.

²⁴ Rida, "Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Hakim Al-Masyhur Bi Tafsir Al-Manar."

²⁵ JASSER AUDA, *Maqashid Al-Shari'ah as Philosophy of Islamic Law A Systems Approach*, 2008.

²⁶ Dkk Sutisna, *Panorama Maqashid Syariah*, 2020.

²⁷ AUDA, *Maqashid Al-Shari'ah as Philosophy of Islamic Law A Systems Approach*.

Interpretation of the Surah Nisa :34 needs to be reformulated to fit the contemporary social context, which is characterized by an increase in divorce cases filed by women as a reflection of social pressure and gender inequality. Through this approach, *Maqasid Shariah* and *Ma'na Cum Maghza*. This verse is not understood as legitimizing male superiority, but rather as affirming moral responsibility, social protection, and the mandate of partnership within the household and society. The thoughts of modern and contemporary figures such as Muhammad Abduh, Rasyid Rida, Jasser Auda, and Abdullahi An-Na'im indicate that "*qawwama*" It is functional, not hierarchical, and should be directed toward justice and collective well-being. This methodology is a theological response to structural social pressures such as patriarchy, economic inequality, and weak gender education. This reformulation of interpretation not only updates the meaning of the verse but also offers a new paradigm for building just, humanistic, and socially beneficial family relationships in accordance with the universal values of the Quran.

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