

THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE MEANING OF QAWWĀM: A GENDER PERFORMATIVITY PERSPECTIVE



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Abstract

The interpretation of QS. An-Nisa' verse 34 has long been one of the most debated topics in gender discourse, particularly regarding the concept of *qawwām*, which is frequently understood as male leadership over women. This verse has often been cited to justify hierarchical perspectives in gender relations, leading to various interpretations from diverse scholarly viewpoints. This study seeks to deconstruct the meaning of *qawwām* by analyzing classical and contemporary exegeses through the framework of gender performativity. Using a literature analysis method, the study reveals that classical interpretations typically reflect hierarchical gender norms rooted in the perceived physical superiority and financial responsibility of men, consistent with the socio-historical context of their time. From the perspective of gender performativity, such norms are understood as social constructs perpetuated through repetitive interpretations and religious traditions. In contrast, contemporary exegeses propose more egalitarian interpretations, viewing *qawwām* as a flexible and dynamic functional responsibility, emphasizing mutuality and gender justice. The study demonstrates that the gender performativity framework can dismantle patriarchal biases in traditional interpretations and offer a new understanding relevant to the challenges of modern society. In conclusion, inclusive interpretations of *qawwām* provide a vital foundation for fostering equitable and just gender relations. The study underscores the importance of sustaining dialogue between interpretive traditions and contemporary social contexts to ensure that Islamic values remain relevant and responsive to modern challenges.

Keywords: *Qawwām*, Gender Exegesis, QS. An-Nisa' 34, Gender Performativity

INTRODUCTION

For decades, the interpretation of QS. An-Nisa' verse 34 has been a frequent topic of debate in Islamic gender discourse (Apriliani et al., 2021). This stanza is regarded as important because it tackles basic questions about men and women's relationships, especially in the context of the family and society. Classical interpretations, such as those developed by Ath-Thabari and Ibn Kathir, generally positioned men as *qawwām* (leaders) over women. This concept was rooted in the socio-historical context of the time, where men played a dominant role as breadwinners. Within that framework, these interpretations not only reflected the social realities of their era but also provided a framework of stability for family structures aligned with the societal norms of the period.

In light of social changes and the growing awareness of gender equality, contemporary interpretative approaches have started to offer more adaptive and responsive perspectives. For instance, Amina Wadud, employing a hermeneutical approach, underscores the importance of contextualizing QS. An-Nisa' verse 34 within the framework of social justice. She explicitly critiques interpretations that perpetuate gender hierarchies, advocating instead for readings grounded in justice and reciprocity between men and women across various spheres of life. This perspective presents a more inclusive interpretative alternative, acknowledging women's roles in the domestic sphere as a choice while simultaneously emphasizing their active participation in the public sphere as a shared responsibility (Rusydia & Azami, 2021).

The concept of *mubadalah* developed by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir also offers a framework rooted in mutuality and partnership between men and women. This approach emphasizes that gender relations should be based on principles of mutual support and shared responsibility. Within the context of QS. An-Nisa' verse 34, *mubadalah* seeks to dismantle patriarchal biases embedded in traditional interpretations while advocating for the application of more equitable relationships in everyday life, particularly in the division of domestic roles (Lestari P, 2020).

The deconstruction of the meaning of *qawwām* involves dismantling dominant assumptions that have shaped traditional interpretations of this term. Through a critical hermeneutical approach, the meaning of *qawwām* can be re-examined to identify elements that support gender equality without disregarding fundamental principles in Islam (Akmaliyah & Khomisah, 2020). This approach enables interpretations that are not merely textual but also contextual, ensuring that the resulting meaning remains relevant to modern social challenges, including gender inequalities within families and society.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity serves as a relevant analytical tool for understanding how gender norms are created, reiterated, and sustained within society. Butler contends that gender is a social construct carried out via repeated behaviors rather than a fixed nature. In this context, patriarchal interpretations of QS. An-Nisa' verse 34 can be understood as a form of gender performativity, a social construct produced and reinforced through the continual repetition of textual interpretations (Zakiyah & Nurfajriyani, 2023).

This study focuses on deconstructing the meaning of *qawwām* by analyzing classical and contemporary interpretations through the integration of a gender performativity perspective. It aims to examine how gender norms are constructed and perpetuated in modern society. While classical interpretations are often considered patriarchally biased, their positive contributions cannot be overlooked. Historically, classical exegeses provided social

stability and guidance relevant to the societal structure of their time. However, addressing the challenges of modern society requires more inclusive reinterpretations that reflect the values of social justice and gender equality. This study aims not only to offer a fresh perspective on understanding QS. An-Nisa' verse 34 but also to propose practical solutions for fostering equitable gender relations in contemporary Muslim societies, aligning with the principles of social justice and the dynamics of changing times.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In recent years, scholarly engagement with Qur'anic interpretations of gender equality has intensified, particularly through comparative analyses of classical and contemporary exegetical traditions (Alfani et al, 2025). These studies frequently seek to interrogate patriarchal biases embedded in the interpretation of key Qur'anic concepts, most notably *qawwām* in Surah An-Nisa (4:34), which has historically been employed to legitimize hierarchical gender relations. While united by a concern for gender justice, these works diverge in methodological approaches and theoretical foundations. For instance, Tafsīr Ibn 'Ashur restricts *qawwām* to the familial sphere, contending that male leadership entails specific obligations and should not be construed as a justification for male superiority in general (Jaya, 2021). Abdul Mustaqim, through a Maqāsidī lens, reframes *qawwām* within a reciprocity-based paradigm, emphasizing balanced familial relationships as essential for mitigating gender inequality (Robikah, 2022). Likewise, Amina Wadud offers a transformative hermeneutic by expanding the interpretation of *qawwām* to encompass broader social responsibilities, including economic and moral dimensions (Rusydia & Azami, 2021). Building upon these developments, contemporary gender theory particularly Judith Butler's notion of performativity introduced in *Gender Trouble* (1990) offers a critical framework for rethinking gender as a socially constructed identity constituted through repeated practices (Gheaus, 2023). From this perspective, *qawwām* is not as a divinely ordained static role, but a dynamic and negotiable construct shaped by social, cultural, and religious forces. This study positions itself at the intersection of classical and modern Qur'anic hermeneutics and gender performativity theory to reconstruct the meaning of *qawwām*. Employing this integrative approach, it aims to offer a more egalitarian and context-sensitive interpretation that is responsive to the complexities of contemporary gender relations.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilizes written sources such as books, articles, research findings, notes, and journals, which are systematically collected and analyzed to gain a deep understanding of the context (Sari and Asmendri, 2020). Through this approach, the concept of *qawwām* is examined by integrating gender performativity theory to analyze how gender norms are constructed, reinforced, and can be deconstructed through interpretation. The analysis includes a comparison of classical and contemporary interpretations of the term *qawwām*, the identification of patterns in gender performativity repetition, and the implications for forming more egalitarian gender norms in modern Muslim societies without compromising the principles of *sharia*. This approach provides a relevant analytical framework to understand the contribution of this verse in promoting gender justice amidst the dynamics of social change.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Meaning of *Qawwām* in Exegesis

1) Meaning of *Qawwām* in Classical Exegesis

Gender interpretations often refer to QS. An-Nisa' verse 34:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّمَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِنَّ وَإِلَىٰ أَرْجَائِهِنَّ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ وَالرَّبَّاءَ كَمَا كَانُوا يَأْتِيَهُنَّ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لِهِنَّ وَالنِّسَاءُ لِيَنفَعْنَ بِنَفْسِهِنَّ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Artinya: “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allâh has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to Allâh and to their husbands), and guard in the husband's absence what Allâh orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husband's property). As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance). Surely, Allâh is Ever Most High, Most Great.” (The Noble Qur'an in the English language, 1404 H)

Biological differences in sex naturally give rise to gender distinctions, with roles shaped by social norms. However, the structural injustices that emerge in the division of domestic and public roles, particularly between men and women within marital relationships, represent an issue that warrants critical examination (Suhada, 2021). QS. An-Nisa' verse 34 serves as a focal point in the discourse on understanding gender relations in Islam, as it addresses the roles of men and women within the family through the term *قَوَّامٌ* (*qawwām*), which is often interpreted as male leadership over women.

The interpretation of the term *qawwām* in QS. An-Nisa' verse 34 generally refers to the responsibility of men to lead, protect, and provide for women, with various nuances offered by different exegetes. Imam Ar-Razi explains that *qawwām* encompasses comprehensive responsibilities, including safeguarding the interests of one's spouse. He cites a narration from Ibn Abbas regarding Sa'ad bin al-Rabi', who struck his wife, as an example of how this verse grants authority and responsibility to men within the family. Prophet Muhammad also emphasized that Allah has established male authority over women, removed retaliatory punishment, and assigned men a central role in the family based on qualities bestowed by Allah (Ismail et al., 2024).

The *Tafsir Jalalain* emphasizes that *qawwām* encompasses the obligations of men to guide, protect, and provide for women, a view aligned with Ahmad Mustafā Al-Maraghi. Al-Maraghi highlights that this authority is a form of responsibility rather than superiority, focusing on the obligation of financial provision as the basis for the larger share of inheritance allocated to men. This advantage, he argues, is rooted in the physical attributes and strength of men, which enable them to fulfill these responsibilities (Nasruloh & Hidayat, 2022).

Ath-Thabari interprets *qawwām* as the leadership role of men, grounded in two primary factors: the advantages granted by Allah, such as physical, intellectual, and social attributes, and the financial responsibilities of men in providing dowry (*mahr*) and maintenance (*nafāqah*) (al-Tabari, 1994). This understanding supports a patriarchal structure

by affirming male authority within the family. Ibn Kathir reinforces this interpretation by incorporating justification from hadith and the opinions of companions, emphasizing men's physical strength and intellectual capacity as the foundation of their authority. He also highlights men's financial responsibilities as part of the social contract regulated by *sharia*, further solidifying their role as *qawwām* (Syaoqi et al., 2018).

In alignment with the interpretations of the aforementioned exegetes, Al-Qurtubī defines *qawwām* as men's responsibility to provide for women financially (النَّفَقَةَ عَلَيْهِنَ) and to protect them from physical and social harm (الدَّبَّ عَنْهُنَّ). He further notes that, in his time, men typically held significant societal roles, such as judges, leaders, and soldiers, which were rarely undertaken by women due to social and cultural constraints. Consequently, Al-Qurtubī concludes that men were deemed more suitable for leadership responsibilities, considering the social and cultural contexts that shaped gender norms during that era (al-Qurtubi, 2006).

These interpretations by the exegetes indicate that the concept of *qawwām* in classical exegesis generally supports a patriarchal structure while still emphasizing men's responsibilities and obligations toward women as part of the social justice framework regulated by *sharia*.

2) The Meaning of *Qawwām* in Contemporary Exegesis

In contrast to classical interpretations, Amina Wadud, a contemporary Muslim feminist scholar, employs a hermeneutical method to reinterpret Qur'anic verses, including QS. An-Nisa' verse 34, to ensure their relevance to the dynamics of modern human life (Jailani, 2024). She interprets *qawwām* not as absolute male authority over women but as a functional responsibility that can change according to social contexts. Wadud emphasizes the importance of understanding Qur'anic verses within the socio-historical context in which they were revealed. She argues that the role of men as protectors and providers was relevant in the past, but in modern societies, where women also contribute economically, this interpretation needs adjustment. Through her feminist hermeneutical approach, Wadud proposes an inclusive interpretation that highlights gender justice, including a reinterpretation of the concepts of *nusyūz* and the term *daraba*, which she understands as "temporary separation" rather than "striking." For Wadud, QS. An-Nisa' verse 34 is a dynamic guide that can be adapted to modern social conditions, thereby fostering more equitable gender relations within Muslim families and communities.

In line with efforts to produce more contextual interpretations, Sa'īd Ramadhān al-Būthī offers a different perspective by distinguishing the Islamic understanding of equality from that of the West. He emphasizes that Islam perceives equality as justice in fulfilling rights and responsibilities, while still acknowledging the distinct nature, capacities, and innate characteristics of each sex. According to al-Būthī, equality that disregards biological and psychological differences is incompatible with human nature. Thus, he criticizes the notion of absolute equality as commonly advocated in Western societies, which tends to homogenize gender roles without considering their natural distinctions ('Ashry & Firdausiyah, 2022).

In Indonesia, inclusive thought on gender relations is further expanded by M. Quraish Shihab. He interprets the concept of *qawwām* in QS. An-Nisa' verse 34 as a functional responsibility rather than hierarchical domination. According to him, this concept should be understood as a form of harmonious cooperation within the household, in alignment with the

principles of justice and harmony taught in Islam (Erviena, 2021). Quraish Shihab's interpretation intersects with the *qirā'ah mubādalah* approach developed by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir.

The *mubādalah* approach developed by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir builds upon Quraish Shihab's inclusive interpretation by emphasizing equal partnership between men and women to achieve a just and harmonious life. The role of *qawwām* is understood as a flexible responsibility that can be exchanged based on necessity, rather than as unilateral male authority, thereby fostering egalitarian relationships. Steps such as *fa'īdūhunna*, *wahjurūhunna*, and *wadribūhunna* are interpreted as collaborative processes aimed at preserving family relationships. This approach also deconstructs patriarchal gender hierarchies by broadening the meaning of *nusyūz* to include behaviors from both parties, promoting a more just and socially relevant reinterpretation of religious texts in modern contexts.

In addition, other Indonesian scholars such as KH. Husein Muhammad and Siti Musdah Mulia have also played significant roles in reforming the understanding of *qawwām*. KH. Husein Muhammad argues that women can assume leadership roles without adopting masculine traits. Instead, he emphasizes the importance of feminine values such as compassion and gentleness as defining characteristics of female leadership. His perspective reflects the flexibility of Islamic interpretation, which can be adapted to the needs of the times (Halimatuzzahro et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Siti Musdah Mulia expands the gender discourse into the public sphere. She asserts that Islam does not restrict women's roles but instead provides space for them to grow according to their individual potential. According to her, the reinterpretation of religious texts is essential to make them more relevant to contemporary social realities, foster gender justice, and challenge entrenched patriarchal structures.

Although contemporary interpretations such as feminist hermeneutics and *qirā'ah mubādalah* have opened new spaces for understanding the concept of *qawwām* in an inclusive manner, these approaches often face challenges in the form of resistance to the deconstruction of traditional exegeses, which are perceived as shifting away from established traditions. The main critique of these interpretations lies in their tendency to blur the lines between textual reinterpretation and fundamental changes in values, which some argue could disrupt the stability of traditional family norms.

However, in the context of an ever-evolving modern society, these approaches are increasingly relevant as they integrate the dynamics of social change and the growing flexibility of gender roles. The perspective of gender performativity becomes crucial in complementing contemporary interpretations, as it highlights how gender constructions are produced, negotiated, and manifested in everyday life. Thus, contemporary interpretations grounded in the perspective of gender performativity offer a more dynamic understanding that not only accommodates reciprocal values but also promotes socially just transformation.

B. Deconstruction of the Meaning of *Qawwām* in the Perspective of Gender Performativity

1) Identifying Performativity Repetition

Social repetition within the context of religion, particularly patriarchy, has been deeply rooted since the traditions of pre-Islamic Arabia (*jahiliyah*), where discriminatory practices against women, such as female infanticide and the subordination of women after

marriage, were normalized. When the Qur'an was revealed, these phenomena persisted through the interpretation of sacred texts, such as QS. An-Nisa' verse 34, which positions men as *qawwām* over women. For instance, Ibn Kathir's exegesis emphasizes male superiority based on biological capacity and financial responsibility, reflecting the patriarchal social context of the time. This interpretation reinforced the norm of male leadership in the public sphere, while women were confined to domestic roles, aligning with the societal structures prevalent in that era (Nurmila, 2015).

This patriarchal context has been perpetuated through religious traditions consistently reinforced by both classical and modern scholars. These interpretations and views not only shape social norms within Muslim communities but also influence the formulation of legal policies at both local and national levels. In Indonesia, for instance, the implementation of UU No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage serves as evidence of how gender-biased religious perspectives are accommodated within state law. Provisions regarding polygamy and the rights of husbands and wives in this law reflect the dominance of classical interpretations that place men in a more advantageous position (Rini & Wibowo, 2023).

Beyond legal policies, this social repetition is also evident in religious education traditions, particularly in *pesantren*. The text *Uqud al-Lujjayn*, widely used as a guide for household ethics, emphasizes the importance of women's obedience to men as the foundation of family harmony. This emphasis is often uncritically accepted by society as an immutable part of religious values. In the context of traditional religious education, this narrative continues to be repeated and passed down from generation to generation without considering the significant social changes that have occurred (Chabibi, 2021). This emphasis is often uncritically accepted by society as an unchangeable part of religious values. Within the context of traditional religious education, this narrative is repeatedly reinforced and passed down from generation to generation without taking into account the social changes that have occurred (Imam & Prapta, 2024).

In the modern context, social repetition that upholds unequal gender relations continues through religious sermons delivered by some male *da'i* in Indonesia, both in mosques and on social media. Their often literal approach to QS. An-Nisa' verse 34 reinforces male authority in households without considering broader sociological contexts, such as the dynamics of gender equality and the evolving roles of women in society. This not only strengthens patriarchal structures but also hinders efforts to reinterpret religious verses in a more inclusive and contextual manner. Conversely, female *da'i*, despite possessing considerable religious knowledge, are often confined to specific domains of women's studies, such as *majelis taklim* or domestic religious gatherings.

The representation of women in leadership within religious organizations remains significantly limited, as reflected in the leadership structure of the Central Board of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) for the 2020–2025 period. Out of 39 strategic positions, only five are held by women (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, n.d.). This disparity highlights the structural and cultural barriers that hinder women's equal participation in the public sphere and narrow the space for more equitable gender perspectives in religious discourse. This persists despite women demonstrating intellectual capability and making significant contributions to Islamic propagation (*dakwah*).

Although gender-biased social repetition remains prevalent in many traditional interpretations, not all modern scholars perpetuate this pattern. Some contemporary global

Muslim figures, such as Muhammad Abduh, assert that leadership is not an inherent right of men alone. According to him, leadership should depend on an individual's capability and competence, whether male or female. This approach offers a more egalitarian paradigm, challenging the assumption that gender automatically determines leadership roles (Iwandri, 2023).

A more critical approach to traditional interpretations is also evident in the thought of Amina Wadud. She introduces an alternative, more inclusive exegesis that emphasizes the importance of reciprocity between men and women in both domestic and societal relationships. Wadud employs a critical hermeneutical approach that not only focuses on the linguistic aspects of the text but also aligns with the ultimate goal of *sharia*, which is justice. According to her, leadership roles should be tied to the principles of justice and universal responsibility rather than being solely based on gender (Wadud, 2006).

Thus, gender-biased social repetition in religious practices must be critically addressed through a dialogue between tradition and modern contexts. The inclusive approaches proposed by these thinkers aim to ensure that Islam remains relevant as a religion that upholds justice and equality for all humanity. The challenge for today's generation of scholars is to develop interpretations that are more contextual, sensitive to social changes, and responsive to gender issues, so that the universal principles of justice in Islam can be realized in everyday life.

2) Performative Gender Analysis of the Meaning of Qawwām and Its Implications

The relationship between gender and the concept of *qawwām* is not inherently contradictory, as Islam affirms the equality of men and women before Allah. According to Nasaruddin Umar, this equality is evident in several key aspects. First, men and women are equally positioned as servants of Allah. Second, both are entrusted with the responsibility of being stewards (*khalifah*) on earth. Third, men and women share primordial compatibility in their creation. Fourth, Adam and Eve were equally active participants in the cosmic drama. Fifth, both possess equal potential to achieve accomplishments. Based on these principles, Islam does not restrict women from assuming leadership roles, provided they possess the necessary competence and capabilities. This equality grants women the same rights to contribute to various aspects of life, including holding leadership positions (Faralita, 2023).

In this regard, QS. An-Nisa' verse 34 introduces the concept of *qawwām*, which can be linked to social, economic, educational, and family law dimensions, all of which significantly contribute to shaping gender performativity. As a bearer of social values, *qawwām* is often interpreted through the phrase *بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ* (*bimā faḍḍalallāhu ba'dahum 'alā ba'din*), which highlights men's advantages in physical aspects and their social role as family protectors. From a performative perspective, this role is not fixed but is constructed and reinforced through repeated actions, such as financial provision and family decision-making. When men fail to fulfill these responsibilities, their role as *qawwām* may be socially questioned, illustrating its dynamic and contextual nature. This implies that *qawwām* can be redefined as an opportunity to emphasize reciprocity and individual capability rather than maintaining rigid hierarchies. The advantages mentioned in this verse are not a basis for supporting gender domination but rather an affirmation of responsibility

in creating social harmony. In this context, family leadership can depend on the capacity and contributions of each individual, whether male or female.

The phrase *وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ* (*wabimā anfaqu min amwālihīm*) connects *qawwām* to economic values, emphasizing that men's financial responsibilities serve as the basis for their authority within the family. In classical exegesis, this role encompasses providing for and fulfilling household needs, which are considered concrete expressions of men's advantages. Such actions construct a performative gender norm that reinforces the idea of men as the primary providers for the family. However, in modern society, where women also contribute significantly to family economics, the financial role of men as the sole foundation of *qawwām* has become less relevant. Therefore, the economic value within *qawwām* should be reinterpreted as a shared responsibility, reflecting reciprocity in gender relations.

The educational dimension of *qawwām* is also evident in the phrase *فَعِظُوهُنَّ* (*fa'izūhunna*), which positions men as moral guides within the family. This responsibility reflects the intellectual role of men in providing direction and advice to women, a notion that has been reproduced as a gender performance within patriarchal societies. However, critical analysis reveals that the ability to educate is not an exclusive attribute of men. In many cases, women serve as the primary educators within families. Therefore, the educational value within *qawwām* should be understood as reciprocal, where men and women share roles in providing moral and intellectual guidance based on their respective abilities.

The familial legal dimension of *qawwām* is also linked to the phrase *وَأَهْرُوهُنَّ* (*wahjurūhunna waḍribūhunna*), which grants men the authority to take corrective actions against wives deemed disobedient. In classical exegesis, such actions are interpreted as part of men's responsibility to maintain family harmony. However, critiques of the implementation of this phrase highlight its potential for misuse, which can harm women. In modern society, the familial legal value of *qawwām* should be understood as guidance for resolving conflicts fairly, based on dialogue, and with respect for women's rights. This phrase should not serve as a tool for legitimizing violence or arbitrary control.

The gender performativity shaped by the concept of *qawwām* reflects a complex interaction between religious norms, social values, and family dynamics. In a more egalitarian interpretation, *qawwām* can be seen as a shared responsibility involving both men and women in fostering social harmony, sharing financial obligations, educating family members, and resolving conflicts fairly. Through this approach, the meaning of *qawwām* becomes more relevant to the context of modern society, which emphasizes equality, collaboration, and respect for individual contributions regardless of gender.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the meaning of *qawwām* in QS. An-Nisa' verse 34, often interpreted as male leadership over women, is a dynamic concept shaped by socio-historical contexts. In classical exegesis, *qawwām* is predominantly understood as men's responsibility to lead and protect women, based on men's physical and financial advantages. While this interpretation reflects the patriarchal structures relevant to its historical context, it has become less aligned with the dynamics of modern society.

Contemporary interpretative approaches, such as Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir's *qirā'ah mubādalāh*, assert that *qawwām* should be understood as a functional and flexible responsibility rather than hierarchical authority.

These approaches offer a more egalitarian reinterpretation that emphasizes the principles of reciprocity and gender justice. In today's context, where women play significant roles in the economy, education, and decision-making, *qawwām* can be redefined as a shared responsibility that prioritizes collaboration between men and women.

By analyzing the meaning of *qawwām* through the perspective of gender performativity, this study demonstrates that the concept is not static but is constructed and reinforced through social, cultural, and religious repetition. A more inclusive reinterpretation has the potential to deconstruct entrenched patriarchal norms, paving the way for the formation of gender norms that are more equitable and relevant to contemporary changes.

As an implication, this study advocates for the integration of more inclusive interpretative approaches into Islamic discourse and public policy. Contemporary exegeses rooted in social justice and reciprocity can serve as a guide for fostering gender relations that are harmonious, responsive to modern challenges, and consistent with Islamic values.

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