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Gender Ambivalence in Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar: Between Islamic Modernism and Patriarchal Tradition in Gender Relations

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Abstract:

This study examines gender ambivalence in Hamka's interpretation of gender-related Qur'anic verses in Tafsir al-Azhar. While previous studies have generally portrayed Hamka either as a modernist reformer or as an exegete who reproduces patriarchal views, little attention has been paid to the ambivalent character of his interpretations of gender relations and the socio-epistemological factors shaping them. Addressing this gap, the study aims to analyze how Islamic modernist ideals and patriarchal traditions coexist within Hamka's interpretation of gender-related Qur'anic verses. Employing discourse analysis and Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, the study investigates Hamka's interpretations of Q. al-Baqarah [2]: 222–223 and 282, as well as Q. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and 34. The findings reveal a pattern of gender ambivalence in which egalitarian and patriarchal tendencies operate simultaneously. In some interpretations, Hamka reinforces male authority and women's subordinate positions, while in others, he emphasizes reciprocity, mutual responsibility, and critiques of patriarchal practices. This ambivalence emerges from the interaction of three factors: a predominantly textual-reflective interpretive approach that seeks limited contextualization, a stronger concern with the maqāṣid of the verses than with theorizing gender relations, and the influence of Hamka's socio-historical background, particularly the encounter between Islamic modernism and Minangkabau cultural

traditions. By conceptualizing gender ambivalence as an analytical framework for examining tensions between egalitarian and patriarchal tendencies in Qur'anic interpretation, this study contributes to the field of Qur'anic gender studies. It demonstrates how socio-historical contexts shape the production of exegetical discourse.

Keywords: *Hamka, Tafsir al-Azhar, Qur'anic Ambivalence, Patriarchy, Equality*

INTRODUCTION

The discourse on gender remains a debatable issue to this day. In this issue, women have become massive objects of discrimination. The forms of discrimination that exist have subsequently given rise to various anti-egalitarian ideologies such as patriarchy, misogyny, and sexism. Among these three anti-egalitarian ideologies, patriarchy is certainly the most dominant one. This ideology holds that women constitute the second class in society, whose sphere is limited to the domestic domain, while men are considered the first class, playing the main role in the public sphere.¹ Although the social reality of modern society shows a positive trend, with an increasing number of women successfully breaking through domestic boundaries and engaging in the public sphere, patriarchal views remain deeply rooted in most societies.² In the context of Muslim societies, such views are not only shaped by social construction but are also often legitimized through religious arguments that are interpreted with gender bias.³ One of the Qur'anic verses that is often misinterpreted and used as a justification for Islamic patriarchy is Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 1. In this verse, there is a phrase *min nafs wāhidah*, which, according to many classical and traditional exegetes, has been interpreted as stating that Hawwā' (Eve, woman) was created from the rib of Ādam (Adam, man).⁴ The implications of this interpretation have led to the view that women are subordinate to men.

The legitimacy of Islamic patriarchy through Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 is further reinforced by other verses, one of which is Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 34. At the beginning of this verse, there is the phrase *al-rijāl qawwāmūn 'alā al-nisā'*, which most exegetes understand as "men are the leaders of women." Certainly, in the context of Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 34, the leadership referred to is household leadership, and ideally, the interpretation of this verse should contain the values of reciprocity within the household. However, in reality, many exegetes write gender-biased narratives when interpreting Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 34.⁵ The implication of such gender-biased narratives may lead to an understanding that women are not only unable to become leaders within the domestic sphere but also incapable of becoming leaders in the public

¹Israpil Israpil, 'Budaya Patriarki dan Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan: Sejarah dan Perkembangannya', *Pusaka: Jurnal Khazanah Keagamaan* 5, no. 2 (November 2017): 141–50, 2, <https://doi.org/10.31969/pusaka.v5i2.176>.

²Nur Ajizah and Khomisah Khomisah, 'Aktualisasi Perempuan dalam Ruang Domestik dan Ruang Publik Perspektif Sadar Gender', *az-Zahra: Journal of Gender and Family Studies* 2, no. 1 (December 2021): 59–73, 1, <https://doi.org/10.15575/azzahra.v2i1.11908>.

³Nina Nurmila, 'Pengaruh Budaya Patriarki terhadap Pemahaman Agama dan Pembentukan Budaya', *Karsa: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 23, no. 1 (June 2015): 1–16, 1, <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v23i1.606>; Mochomad Nadif Nasrulloh and Taufiq Hidayat, 'Budaya Patriarki dalam Rumah Tangga: Pemahaman Teks al-Qur'an dan Kesetaraan Gender', *Yudisia: Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum dan Hukum Islam* 13, no. 1 (June 2022): 139–58, 1, <https://doi.org/10.21043/yudisia.v13i1.14325>.

⁴Agus Imam Kharomen, 'Bias Awal Penciptaan Perempuan dalam Tafsir al-Qur'an: Perspektif Pendekatan Tekstual dan Kontekstual', *al-Quds: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Hadis* 2, no. 2 (December 2018): 187–204, 2, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v2i2.392>; Faizin Faizin, 'Diskursus Penafsiran Ayat Penciptaan Perempuan dalam Jurnal Ilmiah di Indonesia', *Jurnal Ulunnuha* 7, no. 1 (2018): 1–18, 1, <https://doi.org/10.15548/ju.v7i1.233>.

⁵Devi Rizki Apriliani et al., 'Gender dalam Perspektif QS. an-Nisa Ayat 34', *Jurnal Riset Agama* 1, no. 3 (December 2021): 530–40, 3, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jra.v1i3.15129>; Makmur Jaya, 'Penafsiran Surat an-Nisa' Ayat 34 Tentang Kepimpinan dalam al-Quran', *at-Tanzir: Jurnal Ilmiah Prodi Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam* 11, no. 2 (December 2020): 241–68, <https://doi.org/10.47498/tanzir.v11i2.407>.

sphere. In some tafsīr works, gender bias not only constructs patriarchal narratives but also misogynistic ones, which express excessive hatred toward women, even though still within the context of the verse. In addition to these two verses, there are also other Qur'anic verses that, textually, place wives as sexual objects, such as in Qs. al-Baqarah [2]: 222-223, or that textually position women as a gender of lesser value compared to men, such as in Qs. al-Baqarah [2]: 282. Similar to the previous verses, the interpretation of verses that depict women as sexual objects for men⁶ and as a gender of lesser value compared to men⁷ has also been frequently misunderstood by many exegetes, resulting in interpretations laden with gender-biased narratives, which, at a more advanced level, can give rise to sexist and misogynistic ideologies that label women as weak-minded.

Based on the facts mentioned above, this study seeks further to examine the forms of gender-biased narratives in Qur'anic tafsīr. This research takes Tafsir al-Azhar as its primary object of study, which is based on three academic reasons: (1) The reason of authorship, namely that Hamka, the author of Tafsir al-Azhar, is known as an intellectual who mastered various branches of knowledge, was multi-talented, and came from the modernist Islamic group. However, during his lifetime, he held several views that sparked pros and cons, including his views expressed in Tafsir al-Azhar; (2) The reason of tafsīr content, namely the finding that there are several gender-biased narratives in Tafsir al-Azhar when interpreting gender-related verses within the domestic (household) sphere; (3) The reason of inconsistency, a hypothesis that arises from the two previous reasons: if Hamka came from the modernist Islamic group, his tafsīr should have been rich in narratives of gender reciprocity, but in fact, the opposite is true, as there are several parts of his tafsīr that are laden with gender-biased narratives. From this contradiction emerges the urgency of this study, making it interesting to explore further the extent of its significance and its forms. This contradiction, in the context of this research, can be referred to as ambivalence (a contradiction or inconsistency of thought).⁸ Based on these academic considerations, this study intends to propose two research questions: (1) How is Hamka's approach in interpreting gender-related verses? (2) What are the forms and the factors underlying the ambivalence in Hamka's interpretation of gender-related verses?

This study adopts a qualitative library research design by combining Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge. Fairclough's CDA is employed to examine the construction of gender narratives in Tafsir al-Azhar, particularly how meanings related to gender relations are articulated, reproduced, and contested within the text.⁹ Meanwhile, Mannheim's sociology of knowledge provides a socio-epistemological framework for explaining how Hamka's interpretations were shaped by his historical, cultural, and intellectual milieu.¹⁰ The analysis focuses on Hamka's interpretations of Q. al-Baqarah [2]: 222-223 and 282, as well as Q. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and 34, which address themes of conjugal relations, women's testimony, human creation, and household leadership. The analytical procedure consists of four stages: (1) identifying gender-related narratives in Hamka's interpretations; (2) classifying these narratives into patriarchal and egalitarian tendencies; (3) examining their relationship to Hamka's socio-historical context through Mannheim's sociology of knowledge; and (4) analyzing the

⁶Mahbub Ghazali and Nur Afni Khafsoh, 'Penghormatan al-Qur'an terhadap Perempuan dengan Narasi Metaforis: Studi atas Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 223', *QOF* 5, no. 2 (December 2021): 133-46, 2, <https://doi.org/10.30762/qof.v5i2.5>.

⁷Muhammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2002), 84.

⁸KBBi Daring, 'Ambivalensi', 31 October 2025, <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/gender>.

⁹Mas'ud Muhammadiah, *Analisis Wacana Kritis*, 1st edn (Yogyakarta: Azkiya Publishing, 2024), 77.

¹⁰Hamka Hamka, 'Sosiologi Pengetahuan: Telaah atas Pemikiran Karl Mannheim', *Scolae: Journal of Pedagogy* 3, no. 1 (2020): 76-84.

tensions and coexistence between these tendencies as manifestations of gender ambivalence. Through this approach, the study seeks to uncover how Islamic modernist ideals and patriarchal traditions simultaneously inform Hamka's interpretation of gender relations. Recent studies have examined various aspects of gender discourse in Tafsir al-Azhar, including interfaith marriage (Romziana, 2021),¹¹ gender equality (Syafiyah, 2022),¹² leadership (Mizan et al., 2024),¹³ and family resilience (Nasrullah et al., 2024).¹⁴ However, these studies generally focus on particular gender-related themes and tend to portray Hamka's views as either supportive of gender equality or reflective of patriarchal perspectives. Little attention has been paid to the coexistence of these seemingly contradictory tendencies within his interpretations or to the socio-epistemological processes through which they are produced. Therefore, this study fills an important gap by conceptualizing gender ambivalence as an analytical framework for understanding the intersection of Islamic modernism and patriarchal tradition in Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar.

DISCUSSION

Hamka's Socio-Intellectual Background and the Formation of His Interpretive Outlook

Intellectual products cannot be separated from the socio-historical contexts in which they are produced. This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding Hamka's interpretive approach in Tafsir al-Azhar. Born in West Sumatra in 1908, Hamka grew up in a family deeply involved in Islamic reformism.¹⁵ His father, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah, was a prominent Muslim reformer and a leading figure in the modernization of Islamic education in Minangkabau.¹⁶ At the same time, Hamka received a strong foundation in classical Islamic learning through traditional religious institutions, where he studied Arabic grammar, jurisprudence, logic, and other Islamic sciences.¹⁷ Consequently, his intellectual formation was shaped by the encounter between two educational traditions, the classical Islamic scholarly tradition¹⁸ and the emerging modernist movement represented by Muhammadiyah and broader Islamic reformist circles. Hamka's intellectual horizon expanded further through his engagement with prominent Muslim reformers in Java and his extensive reading of both Middle Eastern and Western intellectual traditions.¹⁹ Influenced by reformist thinkers such

¹¹Luthviah Romziana, 'Pernikahan Lintas Agama: Kajian Muqarin Menurut Quraish Shihab Dalam Tafsir al-Mishbah Dan Hamka Dalam Tafsir al-Azhar', *Revelatia: Jurnal Ilmu al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (June 2021): 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.19105/revelatia.v2i1.4135>.

¹²Malihatus Syafiyah, 'Tipologi Kesetaraan Gender dalam Pernikahan Islam Menurut Hamka: Hak dan Kewajiban Suami Istri Tafsir al-Azhar', *el-Bait: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 1, no. 2 (2022): 1–28.

¹³Muhammad Mizan, Arif Firdausi N.r, and Muhammad Mukharom Ridho, 'Kepemimpinan Perempuan dalam al-Qur'an: Studi Komparasi Tafsir al-Azhar dan Tafsir an-Nur', *al-Furqan: Jurnal Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 7, no. 1 (June 2024): 72–91, <https://doi.org/10.58518/alfurqon.v7i1.2541>.

¹⁴Muhamad Nasrullah, Fantri Indarti, and Azzam Ghufrani, 'Family Resilience Strategies in the Contemporary Era: A Comparative Analysis of al-Azhar and Ibn Katsir's Tafsir on Surah at-Tahrim Verse 6', *Al-Karim: International Journal of Quranic and Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 (August 2024): 115–37, <https://doi.org/10.33367/al-karim.v2i2.6032>.

¹⁵Muhammad B. Hamka and Aldo Redho Syam, *Pendidikan Berbasis Nilai-nilai Profetik dalam Pemikiran Buya Hamka*, 1st edn (Tulungagung: STAI Muhammadiyah Tulungagung, 2022), 1.

¹⁶Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, *Ayahku: Riwat Hidup Dr. H. Abdul Karim Amrullah dan Perjuangan Kaum Agama di Sumatra*, 4th edn (Jakarta: UMMINDA, 1982), 58–64.

¹⁷Ibnu Ahmad al-Fathoni, *Biografi Tokoh Pendidik dan Revolusi Melayu Buya Hamka*, 1st edn (Jakarta: Arqom Patni, 2015), 118.

¹⁸M. Yunan Yusuf, *Alam Pikiran Islam Pemikiran Kalam: dari Khawarij ke Buya Hamka hingga Hasan Hanafi*, 2nd edn (Jakarta: Kencana, 2016), 236.

¹⁹al-Fathoni, *Biografi Tokoh Pendidik*, 3–4.

as Muhammad ‘Abduh and by broader social and philosophical discourses,²⁰ Hamka developed a modernist outlook that emphasized rationality, social reform, and the contextual relevance of Islam.²¹ Nevertheless, he remained closely connected to the cultural values of Minangkabau society and to normative understandings rooted in the Islamic scholarly tradition. As a result, his intellectual outlook was shaped by the interaction of modernist aspirations, traditional religious scholarship, and local cultural influences.

These wide-ranging intellectual influences shaped Hamka into a polymathic scholar whose expertise extended beyond Islamic sciences to include literature, history, philosophy, politics, and social thought. His intellectual versatility is reflected in his numerous works, including *Tasawuf Modern*, *Lembaga Budi*, *Falsafah Hidup*, *Islam dan Adat Minangkabau*, *Studi Islam*, and his magnum opus, *Tafsir al-Azhar*.²² Originally developed from a series of lectures delivered at the al-Azhar Mosque in Jakarta and later completed during his imprisonment between 1964 and 1966,²³ *Tafsir al-Azhar* represents the culmination of Hamka’s diverse intellectual experiences and scholarly engagements. The exegetical work consistently demonstrates his commitment to Islamic reform, moral renewal, and the social relevance of Qur’anic teachings, while simultaneously reflecting the enduring influence of inherited religious norms and local cultural values. As a result, Hamka’s interpretive outlook cannot be characterized as purely modernist or purely traditionalist; rather, it emerged from the interaction of these multiple intellectual currents. This socio-intellectual configuration provides an important context for understanding the gender ambivalence identified in this study, particularly the coexistence of egalitarian tendencies associated with Islamic modernism and patriarchal assumptions rooted in religious and cultural traditions.

Hamka’s Interpretive Approach to Gender Verses in *Tafsir al-Azhar*

1. Interpretive Approach to the Qur’anic Verses on Conjugal Relations

Translation of Qs. al-Baqarah [2]: 222-223

"222. And they ask you about menstruation: say, "It is harmful, so keep away from women during menstruation. And do not approach them until they have become pure. Once they have become pure, approach them in the way Allah has directed you." Allah loves the repentant, and He loves those who keep clean." 223. Your women are cultivation for you; so approach your cultivation whenever you like, and send ahead for yourselves. And fear Allah, and know that you will meet Him. And give good news to the believers."²⁴

The interpretive approach employed by Karim Amrullah in *Tafsir al-Azhar* when interpreting Qs. al-Baqarah [2]: 222–223 is a textual approach that refers to both *ra’y* and *ma’tbur* sources. Karim Amrullah explains that this verse was revealed as a response to the question of the Prophet’s Companions concerning how to interact with their wives during menstruation. The background of this question arose because the Muslims who lived as neighbors of the Jews in Madinah observed differences in their religious regulations. The Jews imposed very strict rules upon menstruating women: women in their menstrual period

²⁰Zulfikri Zulkarnaini, ‘Feminist Exegesis in Hamka’s *Tafsir al-Azhar*’, *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu al-Qur’an Dan Hadis* 22, no. 2 (July 2021): 403–26, 2, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2021.2202-07>.

²¹Norbani B. Ismail, ‘The Quranic Exegesis, Reformism, and Women in Twentieth Century Indonesia’, *Studia Islamika* 24, no. 3 (December 2017): 469–501, 3, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v24i3.5187>.

²²Hamka and Syam, *Pendidikan Berbasis Nilai-nilai Profetik*, 19.

²³Ismail, ‘The Quranic Exegesis, Reformism, and Women’, 476–79.

²⁴Talal Itani, *Quran English Translation: Clear, Pure, Easy to Read Modern English*, 1st edn (Amerika Serikat: ClearQuran.com, 2015), 12.

were considered impure (*najis*) and had to isolate themselves; even everything they touched was deemed impure. In response to this, Allah commanded the Prophet to answer that menstruation is “a harm” (*adha*), indicating a state of impurity, and therefore men are commanded to abstain from their wives during menstruation. However, the command to abstain here is not as rigid as that of the Jews, as it is limited only to the context of sexual intercourse. According to Karim Amrullah, the Qur’an employs polite and refined language to refer to conjugal relations, and this prohibition aims to prevent harmful intercourse. Once menstruation ceases and the wife has purified herself (*ghusl*), the marital relationship is again permitted as usual. This verse simultaneously serves as a response to the notion that menstruating women are impure. The verse concludes with an affirmation that Allah loves those who repent and those who maintain cleanliness.²⁵

In interpreting verse 223, Karim Amrullah writes that, indeed, from a textual perspective, the verse places women as sexual objects, and that this verse is a continuation of the preceding one (verse 222). Karim Amrullah’s statement regarding women as sexual objects is connected to the expression in the verse meaning “your wives are a tilth for you.” This phrase, according to him, signifies that wives are the place where the seed of offspring is planted, implying that the verse begins with an exhortation to continue the human lineage. Furthermore, in his *tafsir*, Karim Amrullah notes that this verse also calls for treating one’s wife as oneself, thereby prohibiting any form of harm toward the wife, as doing so would be tantamount to harming oneself. He outlines several conditions for choosing a wife in order to produce good offspring, including that she must be faithful, come from a fertile family, and be capable of bearing many children. From this perspective, the term “tilth” (*harth*) in the verse is understood as a figurative expression referring to women’s fertility. In addition to emphasizing the importance of selecting a wife based on Islamic criteria, Karim Amrullah also highlights the concept of *syahwat* (sexual desire), which he regards as a natural inclination bestowed by Allah upon human beings. However, he stresses that the ultimate purpose of syahwat is not merely for its physical gratification, but rather for the creation of offspring. Within this context, the presence of children functions as a divine test within the household, to determine whether humans can bear responsibility or act merely out of lust. When they fulfill their responsibilities properly, it becomes a means of guiding them toward obedience to Allah.²⁶

2. Interpretative Approach to the Qur’anic Verses on Women’s Testimony

Translation of Qs. al-Baqarah [1]: 282

"282. O you who believe! When you incur debt among yourselves for a certain period of time, write it down. And have a scribe write in your presence, in all fairness. And let no scribe refuse to write, as Allah has taught him. So let him write, and let the debtor dictate. And let him fear Allah, his Lord, and diminish nothing from it. But if the debtor is mentally deficient, or weak, or unable to dictate, then let his guardian dictate with honesty. And call to witness two men from among you. If two men are not available, then one man and two women whose testimony is acceptable to all, if one of them fails to remember, the other would remind her. Witnesses must not refuse when called upon. And do not think it too trivial to write down, whether small or large, including the time of repayment. That is more equitable with Allah, and stronger as evidence, and more likely to prevent doubt, except in the case of a spot transaction between you, then there

²⁵Abdul Malik Abdul Karim Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 1st edn (Singapura: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD, 2003), Vol. 1, 524-525.

²⁶Amrullah, Vol. 1, 525-526.

is no blame on you if you do not write it down. And let there be witnesses whenever you conclude a contract, and let no harm be done to either scribe or witness. If you do that, it is corruption on your part. And fear Allah. Allah teaches you. Allah is aware of everything.²⁷"

The interpretive approach employed by Karim Amrullah in *Tafsir al-Azhar* when explaining Qs. al-Baqarah [2]: 282 is a textual-reflective approach,²⁸ grounded in *ra'y*-based reasoning. Karim Amrullah treats this verse as a comprehensive guideline for maintaining justice and order in matters of debt and credit transactions. He divides his commentary on this verse into fourteen sections, each elaborating a specific ethical or legal aspect of financial dealings. At the outset, Karim Amrullah emphasizes the importance of documenting debts among Muslims for the sake of Allah. He argues that it is inappropriate to avoid written documentation of debts on the basis of close friendship, since life and death are in the hands of Allah, and no one can predict when a debtor might pass away leaving unpaid obligations. The scribe who records the transaction, according to Karim Amrullah, must be honest and just, refraining from either adding to or subtracting from the record. However, honesty alone is not sufficient, the scribe must also avoid any prohibited acts, such as *ribā*, and must constantly remember Allah to stay away from moral corruption. Additionally, both the debtor and creditor are advised to formulate clear agreements regarding the debt, ensuring mutual understanding and fairness. Regarding the debtor's representation, Karim Amrullah classifies those who may require a guardian (*wali*) to dictate on their behalf into three categories: the *safih* (the one who lacks sound judgment); the *da'if* (the weak or incapable); and (3) the one who is unable to dictate for himself. Besides the debtor, creditor, and scribe, Karim Amrullah stresses the necessity of witnesses in every debt contract. Witnesses must be just and trustworthy. Ideally, two male witnesses should be present; however, if only one male is available, he must be accompanied by two female witnesses. This arrangement, according to Karim Amrullah, follows the explicit textual instruction of the Qur'an, ensuring the preservation of justice and accuracy in testimony.²⁹

The inclusion of two female witnesses in the testimony, according to Karim Amrullah, serves the purpose that if one forgets, the other may remind her. When interpreting the gender composition of witnesses, Karim Amrullah further explains that the smaller number of male witnesses compared to females is due to men's greater engagement in public affairs, such as matters of debt, rental contracts, and pledges, while women are generally less involved in such domains. Nevertheless, in terms of honor and dignity, Karim Amrullah emphasizes that men and women possess equal worth in the sight of Allah. He then continues by interpreting the portion of the verse that prohibits the scribe from being reluctant to record the amount of debt, whether small or large. Regarding cash transactions, Karim Amrullah notes that it is permissible not to record them, though documentation remains allowed and even encouraged for the sake of clarity. Furthermore, both the scribe and the witnesses are granted certain rights in this verse: they should not be burdened or wronged during the process of debt agreements. In applying this to the modern context, Karim Amrullah states that notaries are permitted to charge fees for their professional services, as part of the legitimate rights they are entitled to receive. Finally, the verse concludes with a divine exhortation, in which Allah calls upon humankind to maintain piety

²⁷Itani, *Quran English Translation*, 16–17.

²⁸Islah Gusmian, *Kbayanah Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Hermeneutika Hingga Ideologi*, 1st edn (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2013), 274–75.

²⁹Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Vol. 1, 683–684.

(*taqwā*), for through *taqwā*, every matter, especially those that seem difficult, will be made easier by Allah's guidance.³⁰

3. Interpretative Approach to the Qur'anic Verses on Creation of Woman

Translation of Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 1

"1. O people! Fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and created from it its mate, and propagated from them many men and women. And revere Allah whom you ask about, and the parents. Surely, Allah is Watchful over you."³¹

The approach employed by Karim Amrullah in *Tafsir al-Azhar* when interpreting Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 is a textual-reflective approach,³² referring to both *ra'y* and *ma'thūr* sources. In his interpretation, Karim Amrullah begins by highlighting two main messages contained in the verse: (1) that humankind should maintain *taqwā* (piety) toward Allah; and (2) that humankind should uphold humanistic and egalitarian values, emphasizing that all human beings are essentially equal, united by several shared traits. After outlining these core messages, Karim Amrullah elaborates on the diverse opinions regarding the interpretation of the phrase *min nafsīn wāhidah*. The most widely held view, according to him, is the one that interprets the phrase to mean that Hawwā' was created from the rib of Ādam, a position followed by many classical exegetes, including Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Jarīr, Mujāhid, and Ibn Abī Shaybah. In addition, Karim Amrullah cites another narration which explains that the statement that Hawwā' was created from Adam's rib is metaphorical, meaning that the nature of woman resembles that of a rib: if treated harshly, it breaks; if treated too softly, it bends. Thus, it conveys the idea that women must be approached with gentleness and understanding. Beyond these two perspectives, Karim Amrullah also mentions other opinions, such as those from some Shī'ī scholars and the Sūfī Ibn 'Arabī, who argue that before the creation of Adam, there had already been other forms of "Adams." Drawing from these diverse interpretations of the phrase *min nafsīn wāhidah*, Karim Amrullah concludes that the verse invites broad interpretive openness (*ijtihād*), since it does not explicitly refer to a singular origin in the person of Adam. From this perspective, he expands the meaning of the verse, asserting that the phrase "a single soul" refers to the essential unity of humankind, regardless of race, nation, or religion. According to Karim Amrullah, all humans share the same intellectual and moral capacities, they possess reason (*'aql*), seek goodness and reject evil, love beauty and dislike ugliness. Hence, the verse, in his view, calls not only for theological reflection but also for universal human solidarity grounded in equality, morality, and mutual respect.³³

After elaborating on the substance of the verse, Karim Amrullah explains that the cycle of human existence is fundamentally aimed at enabling people to know one another. Humanity, he states, was created as male and female so that they may unite in marriage; and the union between husband and wife begins with two individuals who were once strangers. This bond between man and woman, in his view, serves the natural purpose of procreation and the continuation of offspring. In addition to discussing human diversity, Karim Amrullah also touches on the concept of *shahwat* (sexual desire), emphasizing that men possess a stronger sexual drive than women. Therefore, according to him, it is the man's role to seek, while it is the woman's role to wait and receive. In the subsequent explanation, Karim Amrullah discusses the concept of *arḥām* (kinship or compassion), which he interprets as a

³⁰Amrullah, Vol. 1, 685-688.

³¹Itani, *Quran English Translation*, 17.

³²Gusmian, *Khaṣanah Tafsir Indonesia*, 274-75.

³³Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Vol. 2, 1053-1055.

manifestation of love and affection. Through this natural disposition of compassion, human beings who were created with differences are able to unite. He illustrates this concept with cultural examples. Among the Arabs, for instance, when they live far apart, they form tribes, but when they reunite after separation, they feel deep longing for one another. Upon meeting, they habitually ask about each other's lineage, and through that, mutual recognition and connection are established. Karim Amrullah also draws parallels with Minangkabau culture, where people from different clans or regions, for example, one from Payakumbuh and another from Painan, would naturally develop familiarity and closeness when meeting abroad. If they happen to come from the same clan, they would even regard each other as siblings. Similarly, Batak people identify themselves through family names (*marga*), such as Harahab, Siregar, or Sitompul, and those who share the same *marga* would consider one another family. From these social illustrations, Karim Amrullah concludes that there exists a value of *ukhūmah* (brotherhood) within humanity: although people differ in skin color, ethnicity, and origin, they are united by the faculty of reason (*'aql*), the very capacity that allows human beings to think, connect, and coexist harmoniously.³⁴

4. Interpretative Approach to the Qur'anic Verses on Household Leadership

Translation of Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 34

"34. Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, as Allah has given some of them an advantage over others, and because they spend out of their wealth. The good women are obedient, guarding what Allah would have them guard. As for those from whom you fear disloyalty, admonish them, and abandon them in their beds, then strike them. But if they obey you, seek no way against them. Allah is Sublime, Great."³⁵

The approach employed by Karim Amrullah in *Tafsir al-Azhar* when interpreting Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 is a textual-reflective approach³⁶ that draws upon both *ra'y* and *ma'thūr* sources. This verse is interpreted in conjunction with the preceding verse, Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 33, under the thematic title "Men are Leaders." When interpreting verse 34, Karim Amrullah begins by stating that this verse serves as a legitimization of other Qur'anic verses which indicate that men hold a superior position compared to women. Among the themes he refers to are: the Qur'anic verses on inheritance, where the share of men is greater than that of women; the command that men must pay *mahr* (dowry) to women; the instruction to treat wives kindly; and the allowance for polygamy. Furthermore, Karim Amrullah emphasizes that women cannot be leaders over men, nor are they equal in status. According to him, having four wives can indeed be burdensome for a husband, yet generally men are capable of managing such situations. Conversely, it would be extremely distressing if a wife were to have more than one husband. According to Karim Amrullah, this verse does not explicitly command, "O men, you must be leaders," nor does it state, "O women, you must accept leadership." Rather, the verse first describes a reality, that men are leaders over women, not the other way around. Karim Amrullah illustrates this leadership of men through analogies from the natural world. He compares it to how a flock of ducks is led by a male duck followed by many females, or how among monkeys and apes, the leader is always an older male. For him, men possess particular advantages, such as greater strength and intelligence, which serve as the rationale for their greater responsibility. He further likens leadership to the human body, which has a head, hands, and stomach, all important parts, but the head remains the most

³⁴Amrullah, Vol. 2, 1056-1059.

³⁵Itani, *Quran English Translation*, 19.

³⁶Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia*, 274-75.

essential; thus, in the household, the man assumes the role of the “head.” Karim Amrullah also acknowledges that there are rare instances when a weak man may be led by a woman, yet he argues that such cases are exceptional and cannot form the basis of legal or normative rulings in Islam, citing the principle: “What rarely occurs is as if it does not exist.” To reinforce his argument, Karim Amrullah refers to the Minangkabau custom of Harato Suarang, where even though property may be jointly owned by both men and women in a family, the final decision and ultimate authority still rest with the man.³⁷

In addition to referring to Minangkabau customs, Karim Amrullah reinforces his view by comparing the practice of dowry (*mahr*) in Islamic and Western traditions. Although the form of giving differs between the two, he notes a common principle: regardless of whether the dowry is given by the man or the woman, leadership ultimately remains with the man. Karim Amrullah then continues his interpretation of the verse regarding righteous women (*salihah*), whom he defines as women obedient to Allah. A wife, according to him, bears responsibility for managing household affairs, safeguarding her husband’s property, and educating the children. Matters that are private to the household, such as her husband’s behavior, financial capacity, or any shortcomings, should not be disclosed or complained about to others. The husband, on the other hand, holds the duty to educate and guide his wife, as there are times when a wife may act arrogantly or belittle what her husband provides. A husband, therefore, must offer direction patiently and wisely, avoiding sarcasm or annoyance in speech, while maintaining firm and just leadership. As for the case of a wife committing *nushūz* (disobedience or defiance) despite having been advised, Karim Amrullah explains that Islam prescribes a gradual corrective process: first, through counsel; if that fails, by separating beds; and if disobedience persists, the husband is permitted to strike his wife. However, Karim Amrullah strongly emphasizes that this permission is strictly limited, the husband may not strike the face or any sensitive part of the body, and the striking should be light, akin to how one might strike a child as a form of mild discipline.³⁸

According to Karim Amrullah, a husband may only resort to striking his wife as a last resort and under extreme necessity. From this point, he connects the issue to the verse on polygamy, explaining that while Islam permits polygamy, it is better to avoid it if one fears difficulty in guiding or educating a disobedient (*nushūz*) wife. Karim Amrullah further cites several Prophetic traditions, one of which shows that the Prophet Muhammad did not encourage striking one’s wife, as such an act would be akin to treating women as slaves. A wife, he insists, is not a possession, but a life companion. He then interprets the latter part of the verse as referring to obedient women, meaning those who understand their rights and responsibilities as wives: maintaining the household, preserving dignity, and showing empathy toward their husbands. When a wife embodies these virtues, mutual respect must prevail. Conversely, if a good wife faces a husband who causes conflict, her resistance should not be blamed, for the disturbance originates from the husband himself. In closing his interpretation, Karim Amrullah emphasizes that although a wife is a woman, she must still be honored. A husband must not abuse his authority as head of the household or act arrogantly over the special responsibility given to him. Likewise, violence, whether verbal or physical, is strictly forbidden, for leadership in marriage must be exercised with justice, respect, and compassion.³⁹

Gender Ambivalence in *Tafsir al-Azhar*: Negotiating Patriarchy and Equality

1. Dominance of the Textual-Reflective Approach in Reading Gender-Related

³⁷Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Vol. 2, 1195-1196.

³⁸Amrullah, Vol. 2, 1197-1198.

³⁹Amrullah, Vol. 2, 1298-1202.

Verses

Ambivalence linguistically refers to an unconscious feeling of conflicting attitudes toward the same situation or toward someone at the same time.⁴⁰ In the context of this study, gender ambivalence in the *tafsir* of the Qur'an refers to the inconsistency of the interpreter when interpreting gender-related verses. This inconsistency contains two opposing arguments, namely gender bias and gender equality. Gender-biased narratives are narratives that tend to favor a certain gender and marginalize the other. In this context, the perpetrator of gender bias can be either male or female, however, in practice, gender-biased narratives are often carried out by males, thus positioning females as marginalized.⁴¹ In the context of Islam, gender-biased narratives can be found in religious texts.⁴² The emergence of gender bias in Islamic religious texts is not only caused by the social constructions of interpreters, who mostly lived in patriarchal environments, such as in the Arab world,⁴³ but also because many interpreters are male, which tends to manifest their masculine reasoning and dominance in the religious texts they produce. Furthermore, at a broader level, the Qur'an itself, as an authority for Muslims across different schools of thought, also contains verses that can easily be interpreted in ways that marginalize⁴⁴ certain genders.

When discussing gender-biased narratives in religious texts, several contradictions of opinion by interpreters can be found, particularly among those living during the transitional period of the Modern era. This transitional period refers to a time when gender issues began to emerge as topics of discourse.⁴⁵ The phenomenon of gender ambivalence can be observed in Hamka's interpretations; among the four verses presented, Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 contains the most gender-biased narratives. This is evident, for example, from the main title Hamka chose when interpreting this verse, namely "Men are Leaders."⁴⁶ This is highly ambiguous because, although the verse indeed speaks of leadership, the leadership in the verse pertains to the household domain, therefore, when the main title is generalized, it creates an initial perception that men are leaders in all spaces and times. Furthermore, Hamka's statement at the beginning of his *tafsir*, which explicitly legitimizes this verse as support for other Qur'anic verses that tend to assert male dominance within the family, is heavily laden with patriarchal assumptions. In the subsequent statements, Hamka also reinforces his argument with harsh and inhumane analogies, such as exemplifying male leadership in the animal kingdom, where ducks and monkeys also designate the males as their leaders.⁴⁷

In his exegesis, Hamka also rejects the idea of a wife taking on roles that should be performed by men (the public sphere). Furthermore, Hamka mentions that one of the reasons men are leaders is that men are physically stronger and intellectually superior to women; of course, in a contemporary context, this is inaccurate, since the strength and intelligence of men or women fundamentally depend on the training and effort they

⁴⁰KBBI Daring, 'Ambivalensi'.

⁴¹Agus Afandi, 'Bentuk-bentuk Perilaku Bias Gender', *Journal of Gender and Children Studies* 1, no. 1 (December 2019): 1–18.

⁴²Nurmila, 'Pengaruh Budaya Patriarki', 1–16.

⁴³Nevy Rusmarina Dewi, Azza Ihsanul Fikri, and Afifah Febriani, 'Dinamika Kesenjangan Gender di Arab Saudi: Sebuah Harapan Baru di Era Raja Salman', *Sospol* 6, no. 1 (May 2020): 30–42, 1, <https://doi.org/10.22219/sospol.v6i1.11208>.

⁴⁴Nasrulloh and Hidayat, 'Budaya Patriarki dalam Rumah Tangga', 139–58.

⁴⁵Sindung Haryanto, *Spektrum Teori Sosial: Dari Klasik hingga Postmodern*, 1st edn (Yogyakarta: ar-Ruzz Media, 2012), 12–13.

⁴⁶Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Vol. 2, 1195–1196.

⁴⁷Amrullah, Vol. 2, 1197–1202.

undertake.⁴⁸ After presenting narratives of patriarchy and even misogyny, Hamka, in the subsequent interpretation of Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 34, returns to discussing the actions a husband may take when his wife exhibits *nushūz*, which include advising her, separating bedrooms, and, if necessary, physical reprimand. Regarding the latter, Hamka emphasizes that hitting is permissible only under conditions that do not cause harm, and if it can be avoided, it is preferable not to strike. Moreover, Hamka also highlights the positive aspects of the marital relationship, such as the obligation to safeguard each other's rights and responsibilities and the imperative to maintain the confidentiality of household matters. At the end of the exegesis, Hamka reiterates that a wife is a woman whose rights must be fulfilled and that a husband is prohibited from committing any acts of injustice toward his wife.⁴⁹ From this perspective, it can be observed that while at the beginning of his interpretation of Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 Hamka frequently presents gender-biased narratives, by the end of the exegesis, he reverses this stance by articulating a form of gender reciprocity grounded in equality of rights and responsibilities. This pattern of interpretation differs from that of most contemporary exegetes, who directly emphasize the concept of reciprocal relations within the household,⁵⁰ rather than a hierarchical-hegemonic framework.

The same pattern can also be observed in other cases of interpretation, although the degree of gender ambivalence is not as pronounced as in the exegesis of Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 34 concerning household leadership. For instance, in interpreting Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 1, Hamka successfully generalizes the meaning of the verse to encourage humans to be God-conscious and uphold humanistic and egalitarian values. Yet, on the other hand, this case still contains three negative aspects regarding the relationship between men and women in seeking a spouse, where, according to Hamka, the role of women is to accept, while the role of men is to choose.⁵¹ Similarly, in interpreting the theme of female testimony in Qs. al-Baqarah [2]: 282, Hamka rejects the classical argument that women are intellectually weaker, which traditionally justifies a lower testimonial value compared to men. However, on the other hand, Hamka reinforces a subordinative view, asserting that women's testimony is "weaker" than men's due to their extensive engagement in domestic affairs, which allegedly limits their competence in public matters.⁵² The pattern of gender ambivalence in these three thematic verses cannot be separated from Hamka's textual-reflective approach. This approach in Qur'anic interpretation is considered moderate, as the exegete understands the text normatively on one side, while attempting contextualization using modern idioms when explaining specific cases on the other.⁵³ This approach constitutes the first factor contributing to gender ambivalence, whereby Hamka simultaneously presents patriarchal understandings on one side while striving to construct a conception of gender relations on the other.

2. Prioritizing the *Maqāsid* Approach in the Conceptualization of Gender Relations

One of the patriarchal views within the context of gender relations is the perspective that positions women as sexual objects. Essentially, this notion reflects a domestic judgment

⁴⁸Samsul Anwar et al., 'Laki-laki atau Perempuan, Siapa yang Lebih Cerdas dalam Proses Belajar? Sebuah Bukti dari Pendekatan Analisis Survival', *Jurnal Psikologi* 18, no. 2 (December 2019): 281, <https://doi.org/10.14710/jp.18.2.281-296>.

⁴⁹Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Vol. 2, 1200-1202.

⁵⁰Muhammad Sibawaihi et al., 'Rereading Al-Rijāl Qawwāmūn `Alā al-Nisā'; Feminist Interpretations Of Surah al-Nisa' (34) in Contemporary Muslim Households', *Jurnal Ulunnuha* 14, no. 1 (June 2025): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.15548/ju.v14i1.9687>.

⁵¹Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Vol. 2, 1053-1059.

⁵²Amrullah, Vol. 1, 524-526.

⁵³Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia*, 274–75.

applicable within the household context.⁵⁴ However, the issue of sexual objectification of women can also extend into the public sphere, which can be simply understood as actions that treat a woman's body as a sexual object for men, whether directly or in visual representations, such as photographs or videos.⁵⁵ In this context, women are placed merely as "tools of gratification" for men. This perspective cannot be separated from social constructions, as it is influenced by the general societal perception of women, which tends to be patriarchal. Fundamentally, both men and women can assume roles as either sexual subjects or objects; this latter perspective embodies reciprocity or mutuality. The Qur'an also contains verses that explicitly place women as objects, as exemplified in Qs. al-Baqarah [2]: 222-223, where the text states, "your wives are a tilth for you." This phrase is interpreted to mean that wives are the place where husbands "plant seeds" for their children (as objects). When understood in this way, the interpretation remains moderate, as its primary purpose is procreation, not merely positioning the wife as a "tool of gratification." It appears that Hamka, when interpreting this verse, also adhered to the *maqāsid* of the verse, viewing women as objects for the purpose of procreation rather than as "tools of gratification."⁵⁶ Thus, Hamka's interpretation does not give rise to biases that, at a further level, could reinforce views of female inferiority and patriarchal Islam. This demonstrates an effort to guide the meaning toward the intended purpose of the verses, rather than interpreting them literally.

Indeed, Hamka's decision to expand his interpretation by emphasizing Islamic criteria for selecting women to bear good offspring can be seen as an effort to reveal the substantive meaning of the verse. In this context, Hamka's interpretation can still be regarded as within the corridor of moderate exegesis. Based on Hamka's interpretation, it can also be understood that the concept of women as sexual objects in Islam differs from the general societal understanding, which has been overemphasized and negatively connoted, reducing women merely to "tools of gratification." In addition to Qs. al-Baqarah [2]: 223, when interpreting Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 1, Hamka also highlighted several *maqāsid* of the verse. He noted that one of its messages is humanism and egalitarianism, wherein he exercised *ijtihād* by arguing that the phrase *min nafsīn wāhidah* signifies the unity of humanity. Despite differences among humans, there exist certain commonalities that unite them. These differences are intended to encourage humans to know one another, with a particular form being the union of a man and a woman in marriage, whose primary purpose is procreation. For Hamka, the "one soul" within humans signifies a unifying element connecting individuals, even if they differ in religion, ethnicity, race, or culture. Two of the unifying aspects Hamka emphasized are the shared capacity for reason and common values, for instance, the universal human love for goodness and beauty. This, in turn, forms the concept of *arham*, which Hamka interpreted as *ukhuwah* or fraternity among humans.⁵⁷ The exposition of *maqāsid* in these two cases of verses can indeed demonstrate the universal values contained in the Qur'an, which reflects the modern aspects of this interpretation.⁵⁸ However, the exegesis has not yet reached the level of constructing a more concrete concept of gender relations. Nevertheless, the universal values revealed in Hamka's interpretations can serve as a foundation for contextualizing the verses.

⁵⁴Riska Mutiah, 'Sistem Patriarki dan Kekerasan atas Perempuan', *Komunitas: Jurnal Pengembangan Masyarakat* 10, no. 1 (September 2019): 58–75, <https://doi.org/10.20414/komunitas.v10i1.1191>.

⁵⁵Gulia Ichikaya Mitzy and Silfanny Zahirah, 'Feminisme Radikal dan Eksploitasi Perempuan Suriah Sebagai Objek Seksual Terkait Imbalan Bantuan Kemanusiaan', *Syntax Literate: Jurnal Ilmiah Indonesia* 5, no. 11 (November 2020): 1325–35, <https://doi.org/10.36418/syntax-literate.v5i11.1768>.

⁵⁶Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Vol. 1, 525.

⁵⁷Amrullah, Vol. 2, 1053-1059.

⁵⁸Umi Wasilatul Firdausiyah, 'Modernisasi Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Dalam Tafsir al-Azhar Karya Buya Hamka', *Jurnal Ulunnuha* 10, no. 1 (June 2021): 65–77, <https://doi.org/10.15548/ju.v10i1.2745>.

3. The Dialectics of Exegetical Text and the Socio-Cultural Context of Minangkabau

The context of the interpreter, including education, culture, and surrounding social conditions, inevitably influences the interpretation, whether directly or indirectly. This becomes a distinctive feature of the local character of a Qur'anic *tafsir*.⁵⁹ In the interpretation of gender-related verses in *Tafsir al-Azhar*, at least two verses employ cultural arguments to reinforce Hamka's perspective. These cultural arguments are ambivalent: some strengthen the concept of equality he develops, while others reinforce patriarchal views. The first example is found in Hamka's interpretation of Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 1. When interpreting this verse, Hamka refers to Minangkabau customs in interactions with people of different clans, noting that they often greet each other and even consider each other as relatives despite having different clans.⁶⁰ The reference to Minangkabau culture is intended to reinforce his argument about diversity that unites. In this context, however, the Minangkabau cultural reference does not significantly affect his view of gender relations, since in this verse Hamka primarily generalizes and contextualizes the message. A different pattern can be observed in Hamka's interpretation of Qs. al-Nisā' [4]: 34. In interpreting this verse, Hamka refers to one Minangkabau custom, Harato Suarang, which pertains to the tradition in which a husband and wife may jointly own property.⁶¹ However, the use of joint property does not imply that the wife becomes the leader or holds equal status with the husband, as in this tradition the husband remains the ultimate decision-maker. Thus, by referencing the Harato Suarang custom, Hamka reinforces a narrative of gender bias, showing a tendency to reject gender reciprocity, which is further strengthened by the culture in which he was born and raised.

This can be explained by two factors: *first*, the Minangkabau tradition at that time still viewed gender relations through a patriarchal lens; *second*, Hamka was a transitional-era figure raised by teachers and within an environment that maintained a strong traditional climate, despite his orientation toward modern Islam.⁶² Additionally, observing his intellectual genealogy, it is evident that his role models were all male,⁶³ which reinforced a masculine reasoning in his interpretation of the household leadership theme. However, the influence of Minangkabau culture on Hamka's interpretation should not be understood solely in terms of patriarchal reinforcement. Although Hamka employs the concept of Harato Suarang to support male leadership within the household, Minangkabau society itself embodies a more complex configuration of gender relations. As a matrilineal society, it grants women significant authority in matters of lineage, inheritance, and cultural continuity, while at the same time preserving important leadership roles for men within both customary and familial structures.⁶⁴ Consequently, Hamka's interpretation reflects not a simple rejection of matrilineal values but an engagement with the internal tensions embedded within Minangkabau social life. His emphasis on male authority in the household coexists with his recognition of women's social significance, producing an interpretive position that neither fully embraces patriarchal dominance nor consistently advances gender reciprocity. In this

⁵⁹Aldomi Putra, Hamdani Anwar, and Muhammad Hariyadi, 'Lokalitas Tafsir al-Qur'an Minangkabau: Studi Tafsir Minangkabau Abad ke-20', *al-Quds: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Hadis* 5, no. 1 (May 2021): 309–36, 1, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v5i1.2550>.

⁶⁰Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Vol. 2, 1058.

⁶¹Amrullah, Vol. 2, 1196.

⁶²Zulkarnaini, 'Feminist Exegesis in Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar', 403–26.

⁶³Amrullah, *Ayahku: Riwat Hidup Dr. H. Abdul Karim*, 118–21; al-Fathoni, *Biografi Tokoh Pendidik*, 3–4.

⁶⁴Halimatussa'diyah Halimatussa'diyah et al., 'Minangkabau Matrilineal: The Correlation Between the Qur'an and Gender', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 80, no. 1 (January 2024): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.4102/HTS.v80i1.8643>.

sense, the ambivalence found in Hamka's interpretation may be understood as a reflection of the broader encounter between Islamic modernism, matrilineal cultural traditions, and inherited religious norms that shaped his socio-intellectual worldview.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Hamka's interpretation of gender-related Qur'anic verses in *Tafsir al-Azhar* is characterized by a textual-reflective approach that combines commitment to Islamic reform with adherence to inherited religious traditions. Rather than consistently advocating either patriarchal or egalitarian positions, Hamka interprets gender relations through a framework that seeks to preserve the normative authority of the Qur'anic text while responding to the social realities of his time. As a result, his interpretations reveal a complex and often inconsistent engagement with questions of gender. The study further finds that the dominant pattern underlying Hamka's interpretation is gender ambivalence, manifested in the coexistence of patriarchal and egalitarian tendencies within the same exegetical discourse. This ambivalence is particularly evident in his treatment of issues such as leadership, marital relations, testimony, and human creation. Three interrelated factors contribute to this pattern: his predominantly textual-reflective interpretive orientation, his greater concern with the *maqāṣid* of Qur'anic verses than with theorizing gender relations, and the influence of his socio-intellectual background, which was shaped by the interaction between Islamic modernism, traditional religious scholarship, and Minangkabau cultural values. Theoretically, this study contributes to Qur'anic gender studies by proposing gender ambivalence as an analytical framework for examining how egalitarian aspirations and patriarchal assumptions may coexist within a single interpretive tradition. The findings suggest that Qur'anic interpretation should not be understood through rigid dichotomies such as "patriarchal" versus "egalitarian," but rather as a dynamic process shaped by the complex interaction between text, interpreter, and socio-historical context. Future research may extend this framework to other modern Muslim exegetes in order to explore whether similar patterns of gender ambivalence emerge across different intellectual, cultural, and historical settings.

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