

**REINTERPRETATION OF GENDER-BIASED HADITHS: A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN ISLAM****Mira Fauziah**

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Email: mira.fauziah@ar-raniry.ac.id**ABSTRACT**

Studies on the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) often perceived as gender-biased are frequently conducted through textual approaches, which can result in interpretations that are unfair to women. This approach contradicts the values of gender equality enshrined in the Qur'an. Therefore, contextual analysis is necessary to understand these hadiths in a manner that is more relevant to the dynamics of modern society. This study employs a descriptive-analytical approach using qualitative methods. Primary data, including hadith collections such as *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, as well as Qur'anic exegeses such as *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, are analyzed using historical, linguistic, and sociocultural approaches. Modern literature, including the works of Nasaruddin Umar and Muhammad Syahrur, is used as secondary references to support the analysis. The study finds that hadiths such as "women are created from a man's rib," "women are deficient in intellect and religion," "women are 'awrah," and "a people who entrust their affairs to a woman will never prosper" reflect specific socio-historical contexts that necessitate reinterpretation. A contextual approach reveals that these hadiths are not intended to discriminate against women but instead provide guidance to maintain harmony in gender relations according to their time. This study affirms that the principles of gender equality in the Qur'an can serve as a foundation for the inclusive and equitable reinterpretation of hadiths.

Keywords: *Gender, Hadiths, Qur'an, Contextual Approach***ABSTRAK**

Kajian terhadap hadis Nabi Muhammad SAW yang dianggap bias gender seringkali dilakukan secara tekstual, yang dapat menghasilkan interpretasi yang tidak adil terhadap perempuan. Pendekatan ini bertentangan dengan nilai-nilai kesetaraan gender yang terkandung dalam Al-Qur'an. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan analisis kontekstual untuk memahami hadis-hadis tersebut secara lebih relevan dengan dinamika sosial modern. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis dengan metode kualitatif. Data primer berupa kitab hadis seperti Shahih al-Bukhari dan Shahih Muslim, serta tafsir Al-Qur'an seperti Tafsir Ibnu Katsir, dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan historis, linguistik, dan sosiokultural. Literatur modern seperti karya Nasaruddin Umar dan Muhammad Syahrur juga digunakan sebagai referensi sekunder untuk mendukung analisis. Kajian ini menemukan bahwa hadis-hadis seperti "wanita diciptakan dari tulang rusuk laki-laki", "wanita kurang akal dan agama", "wanita adalah aurat", dan "tidak beruntung suatu



kaum yang dipimpin oleh wanita" mencerminkan kondisi sosial-historis tertentu yang membutuhkan interpretasi ulang. Pendekatan kontekstual mengungkap bahwa hadis-hadis ini tidak bermaksud mendiskriminasi perempuan, tetapi justru memberikan nasihat untuk menjaga keharmonisan hubungan gender sesuai konteks zamannya. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa prinsip kesetaraan gender dalam Al-Qur'an dapat menjadi landasan reinterpretasi hadis secara inklusif dan adil.

Kata Kunci: *Gender, Hadis, Al-Qur'an, Pendekatan Kontekstual,*

A. INTRODUCTION

The study of the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has been a significant focus within the Islamic scholarly tradition. Hadiths not only serve as a normative source of teachings but have also become the subject of ongoing academic analysis, particularly in understanding their relevance to contemporary social contexts. One prominent issue frequently examined is gender bias in hadiths, which pertains to the roles of men and women in societal life.¹ The issue of gender bias is pertinent because deeply rooted social structures often confine women to the domestic sphere while men dominate the public domain. Such an unequal division can result in injustices, particularly against women.² In this context, hadiths perceived as exhibiting gender bias spark critical discourse on how these texts are understood and applied in modern life, which increasingly demands gender equality.³

Previous research has largely adopted a textual approach in interpreting gender-biased hadiths, often neglecting the historical and social contexts in which the hadiths emerged. This oversight creates a gap in the academic literature, particularly regarding how hadiths can be reinterpreted to align with the Qur'an's universal values of gender equality.⁴ Thus, a contextual

¹ Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender Perspektif Al-Qur'an* (Paramadina, 2001); Mansour Fakih, *Analisa Gender Dan Transformasi Sosial* (Pustaka Pelajar, 1996).

² *Perempuan Dalam Literatur Islam Klasik*, ed. by Ali Muhanif (Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2002).

³ Gisela Webb and Amina Wadud, 'Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective', ed. by Amina Wadud, *Journal of Law and Religion*, 15.1/2 (2000), p. 519, doi:10.2307/1051560; Khaerul Umam, Muhammad Yazid Bustomi, and Agung Maulana, 'Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis: Meluruskan Pemahaman Nash Misoginis', *Tadabbur: Jurnal Integrasi Keilmuan*, 3.01 (2024), pp. 1–15, doi:10.15408/tadabbur.v3i01.41458; Yusawinur Barella, Muhammad Yahya, and Ambo Asse, 'PEMAHAMAN GENDER DALAM PERSPEKTIF HADIS', *Holistic Al-Hadis*, 9.2 (2023), pp. 155–75, doi:10.32678/holistic.v9i2.9368.

⁴ M. Quraish Shihab, 'Wawasan Al-Qur'an', *Wawasan Al-Qur'an Tafsir Maudhu'i Atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat*, November, 1996; Asghar Ali Engineer, *Pembebasan Perempuan*, ed. by Nur Kholik Ridwan (LKIS, 1999).



analysis is necessary to reconstruct the understanding of hadiths in accordance with principles of social justice.⁵

This study aims to analyze hadiths considered gender-biased by employing a contextual approach. The approach seeks to harmonize the understanding of hadiths with the principles of gender equality enshrined in the Qur'an. A descriptive-analytical method with a qualitative approach is utilized. The data comprises primary sources, such as hadith compilations (Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim) and Qur'anic exegeses (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Manar), alongside secondary sources, including literature on gender and hadith interpretation, such as the works of Nasaruddin Umar (2001), Mansour Fakhri (2001), and Muhammad Syahrur (1990). The analysis is conducted contextually, incorporating historical, sociocultural, and linguistic studies to trace the original meaning of hadiths in relation to the context of the Prophet Muhammad's era. This method aims to provide a more inclusive and dynamic understanding of gender bias in hadiths, enabling interpretations that are relevant to modern developments while adhering to the normative foundations of Islam.

B. DISCUSSION

1. The Concept of Gender in Islam and the Qur'anic Perspective

The term “gender” in Indonesian originates from English and is often mistakenly considered synonymous with “sex.” However, there is a significant distinction between the two. “Sex” refers to biological aspects that are innate, such as anatomical differences, hormonal composition, and reproductive functions. For instance, males possess biological features like a penis and the ability to produce sperm, while females have a uterus, vagina, and the ability to give birth and breastfeed. These differences are permanent and cannot be naturally altered. In contrast, “gender” refers to social traits, roles, and responsibilities attributed to men and women through cultural constructions.⁶ For example, women are often perceived as gentle, emotional, and nurturing, whereas men are considered rational, strong, and authoritative. However, these characteristics are dynamic and interchangeable, depending on social and cultural contexts.

Gender differences are not solely based on physical distinctions but also on cultural constructs that evolve within societies. These constructs often create a hierarchy of roles, where men are prioritized in public domains such as politics and economics, while women are confined to domestic spheres. This perspective fosters a dichotomy that places women at a disadvantage in many aspects of life. Even in the workplace, women are often associated with domestic tasks, whereas men are deemed more suitable for public roles. Consequently, women are frequently regarded as second-class citizens with unequal access to education, economics, and politics.⁷

⁵ Muhammad Syahrur, *Al-Kitab Wa Al-Qur'an Qira'ah Mu'ashirah* (Al-Ahali, 1990).

⁶ Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper, *Ensiklopedia Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial, Terj. Haris Mumender* (Raja Grafindo Persada, 2000).

⁷ Mansour Fakhri, *Analisis Gender Dan Transformasi Sosial* (Pustaka Pelajar, 2008).



From an Islamic perspective, the Qur'an provides a framework that emphasizes equality between men and women. Nasaruddin Umar⁸ explains that the Qur'an views men and women as equals before Allah, based on five key principles. First, men and women are equally servants of Allah, accountable to Him, as stated in Q.S. Al-Hujurat Verse 13: *"Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you."* This principle demonstrates that one's status before Allah is determined not by gender but by piety. Second, men and women are equally entrusted as stewards (khalifah) on Earth, as mentioned in Q.S. Al-Baqarah Verse 30 and Al-An'am Verse 165. Third, both received the same primordial covenant with Allah, as noted in Q.S. Al-A'raf Verse 172. Fourth, men and women share an active role in the history of human creation as depicted in several Qur'anic narratives. For instance, Q.S. Al-Baqarah Verse 35 and Al-A'raf Verse 20–23 highlight the shared responsibility of Adam and Eve in their actions in paradise, illustrating mutual accountability for their decisions. Fifth, the Qur'an affirms that men and women possess equal potential to achieve success in this world and the hereafter. This is emphasized in Q.S. Ali Imran Verse 195, An-Nisa' Verse 124, and An-Nahl Verse 97, which stress that every individual will be rewarded based on their deeds, irrespective of gender.

Thus, the Qur'an provides a solid foundation for gender equality. The differences between men and women in Islam are more functional in nature, rooted in complementary capabilities and responsibilities. This principle suggests that gender discrimination has no theological justification in Islamic teachings. Therefore, the understanding of gender in Islam should reflect justice and equality as taught in the Qur'an.

2. Gender Bias in the Study of the Prophet Muhammad's Hadith

Hadiths often perceived as containing gender bias have been the focus of attention for both classical and contemporary scholars. Studies of these hadiths reveal differing approaches to understanding the texts, ranging from textual interpretations that tend to be literal to contextual approaches that consider historical and sociocultural aspects. Some of the hadiths discussed in this paper include the hadith about women being created from a man's rib, the hadith regarding women's deficiency in intellect and religion, the hadith portraying women as 'awrah, and the hadith concerning female leadership.

1) The Hadith on Women Being Created from a Man's Rib

Imam Muslim narrates a hadith as follows:

وَحَدَّثَنِي حَزْمَلَةُ بْنُ يَحْيَى أَخْبَرَنَا ابْنُ وَهْبٍ أَخْبَرَنِي يُونُسُ عَنْ ابْنِ شَهَابٍ حَدَّثَنِي ابْنُ الْمُسَيَّبِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " إِنَّ الْمَرْأَةَ كَالضِّلْعِ إِذَا ذَهَبَتْ تَقِيمُهَا كَسَرْتَهَا وَإِنْ تَرَكْتَهَا اسْتَمْتَعْتَ بِهَا وَفِيهَا عَوْجٌ "

Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: Woman is like a rib. When you attempt to straighten it, you

⁸ Nasaruddin Umar, *Kodrat Perempuan Dalam Islam* (Fikahati Aneska, 2000); Umar.



would break it. And if you leave her alone you would benefit by her, and crookedness will remain in her.⁹

This hadith is often interpreted textually, leading to the perception that women inherently possess a "crooked" or less perfect nature compared to men.¹⁰ This understanding has been widely adopted by classical scholars who argued that the hadith illustrates women's natural weaknesses. However, such a textual interpretation has been critiqued by contemporary scholars who advocate for a contextual understanding of the hadith.

According to Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani in *Fath al-Bari*, the hadith carries a metaphorical meaning rather than a literal description. Ibn Hajar explains that the term "crookedness" in the hadith refers to the unique nature of women, distinct from men. This includes traits such as gentleness and emotional sensitivity, which require careful and wise interaction. Through this hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) advises men to acknowledge and accept the differences in women's characteristics.¹¹

Additionally, the term "crookedness" can also be interpreted as a depiction of women's vulnerability within the social structure of that time. This aligns with the cultural context, where women were often placed in subordinate roles within households and society. As Nasaruddin Umar¹² suggests, the hadith serves as a reminder for men to be patient and appreciative of women, refraining from imposing the same standards as those applied to men.

The key message of this hadith is an encouragement to understand women's nature as inherent and not something to be forcibly corrected. If this nature is perceived as a weakness, it should not justify discrimination or unjust treatment of women. Instead, the hadith emphasizes the importance of treating women with compassion and understanding.

In a modern context, this hadith can be seen as the Prophet's effort to highlight the rights of women within the household. Ibn Hajar also notes that the term *fastauṣū* (used in related hadiths) conveys a directive to treat women kindly. Thus, this hadith remains relevant as a reminder of the importance of recognizing women's rights within family and societal institutions.

2) *The Hadith on Women Being "Deficient in Intellect and Religion"*

Imam Muslim narrates the following hadith:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ رُمْحٍ بْنِ الْمُهَاجِرِ الْمِصْرِيُّ أَخْبَرَنَا اللَّيْثُ عَنْ ابْنِ الْهَادِ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ دِينَارٍ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ " يَا مَعْشَرَ النِّسَاءِ تَصَدَّقْنَ وَأَكْثِرْنَ الْإِسْتِغْفَارَ فَإِنِّي رَأَيْتُكُمْ أَكْثَرَ أَهْلِ النَّارِ ". فَقَالَتْ امْرَأَةٌ مِنْهُنَّ جَزَلَةٌ وَمَا لَنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَكْثَرَ أَهْلِ

⁹ 'Sahih Muslim 7151 - The Book of Suckling - كتاب الرضاع - Sunnah.Com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم) <<https://sunnah.com/muslim:7151>> [accessed 7 December 2024].

¹⁰M. Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), hal. 300

¹¹Ibnu Hajar Al-'Asqalani, *Fath Al-Bary bi Syarh Al-Bukhary* Jilid VII (Beirut: dar Al-Fikr, t.t.), hal. 177

¹² Umar.



النَّارِ . قَالَ " تَكْثُرَنَّ اللَّعْنُ وَتَكْفُرَنَّ الْعَشِيرَ وَمَا رَأَيْتُ مِنْ نَاقِصَاتِ عَقْلِ وَدِينٍ أَغْلَبَ لِيذِي لُبٍّ مِنْكُمْ " .
قَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَقَصَانُ الْعَقْلِ وَالَّذِينَ قَالَ " أَمَا نَقَصَانُ الْعَقْلِ فَشَهَادَةُ أَمْرَاتَيْنِ تَعْدِلُ شَهَادَةَ رَجُلٍ
فَهَذَا نَقَصَانُ الْعَقْلِ وَتَمَكُّتُ اللَّيَالِي مَا تَصَلِّي وَتُفْطِرُ فِي رَمَضَانَ فَهَذَا نَقَصَانُ الدِّينِ " .¹³

It is narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah b. Umar that the Messenger of Allah observed: O womenfolk, you should give charity and ask much forgiveness for I saw you in bulk amongst the dwellers of Hell. A wise lady among them said: Why is it, Messenger of Allah, that our folk is in bulk in Hell? Upon this the Prophet observed: You curse too much and are ungrateful to your spouses. I have seen none lacking in common sense and failing in religion but (at the same time) robbing the wisdom of the wise, besides you. Upon this the woman remarked: What is wrong with our common sense and with religion? He (the Holy Prophet) observed: Your lack of common sense (can be well judged from the fact) that the evidence of two women is equal to one man, that is a proof of the lack of common sense, and you spend some nights (and days) in which you do not offer prayer and in the month of Ramadan (during the days) you do not observe fast, that is a failing in religion. ¹⁴

This hadith is often cited as a justification for discrimination against women, as it explicitly mentions that women are "deficient in intellect and religion." However, a purely textual interpretation fails to consider the context in which the hadith was delivered. Abu Syuqqah¹⁵ explains that the Prophet (PBUH) made these remarks in a lighthearted manner during a relaxed gathering after the Eid al-Fitr prayer, accompanied by religious advice. In this setting, the Prophet was not disparaging women but lightly addressing practical shortcomings stemming from biological and social differences of that era.¹⁶

Regarding the "deficiency in intellect," this statement refers to Q.S. Al-Baqarah Verse 282, which stipulates that the testimony of two women is equivalent to the testimony of one man. Classical scholars, such as Ibn Kathir, interpreted this rule within the traditional context of Arab society, where women were less involved in public financial transactions. In a modern context, scholars like Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida¹⁷ emphasize that this stipulation is contextual and does not reflect women's intellectual capabilities. As for the "deficiency in religion," this relates to the biological

¹³ 'Sahih Muslim 79a - The Book of Faith - كتاب الإيمان - Sunnah.Com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم)' <<https://sunnah.com/muslim:79a>> [accessed 7 December 2024].

¹⁴ Imam Muslim, *Shahih Muslim*, (Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Hadithah, n.d.), hal. 234.

¹⁵ A.A.H.A. Shuqqah and A Salahi, *The Character of the Muslim Woman: Women's Emancipation During the Prophet's Lifetime*, G - Reference, Information and Interdisciplinary Subjects Series (Kube Publishing Limited, 2022).

¹⁶ Muhanif, p. 62.

¹⁷ Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha, *Tafsir Al-Manar, Jilid III* (Dar al-Manar, 1996), pp. 85-88.



reality of menstruation, which temporarily exempts women from performing prayers and fasting. However, this does not imply a spiritual inferiority but rather acknowledges the dispensations granted by Allah to protect women's physical and emotional well-being. Asghar Ali Engineer¹⁸ similarly interprets Q.S. Al-Baqarah Verse 282 as specific to financial dealings, contextualizing the verse in an era where women lacked sufficient experience in such matters. The requirement for two female witnesses aimed to ensure accuracy through mutual support in case one forgot details.

When viewed in a broader framework, the hadith actually acknowledges women's strengths that compensate for what is termed "deficiency." The Prophet explicitly recognized women's ability to influence men of sound intellect, highlighting their emotional and social strengths. Ibn Hajar, in *Fath al-Bari*, emphasizes that this hadith is not intended to demean women but to encourage self-improvement through righteous acts such as charity and seeking forgiveness. In a modern context, this hadith can be understood as a reminder that biological and social differences between men and women should not serve as grounds for discrimination. Instead, these differences should be seen as part of the unique qualities of each gender, deserving fair recognition and appreciation. Thus, this hadith is better interpreted as a reflection of the social realities of the Prophet's time, requiring adjustments in its interpretation to align with Islam's universal values of justice and equality.

3) *The Hadith on Women Being 'Awrah*

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارٍ حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرُو بْنُ عَاصِمٍ حَدَّثَنَا هَمَّامٌ عَنْ قَتَادَةَ عَنْ مُوَرِّقٍ عَنْ أَبِي الْأَحْوَصِ
عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " الْمَرْأَةُ عَوْرَةٌ فَإِذَا خَرَجَتْ اسْتَشْرَفَهَا الشَّيْطَانُ ".
قَالَ أَبُو عَيْسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ غَرِيبٌ.¹⁹

Abdullah narrated that The Prophet said: "The woman is Awrah, so when she goes out, the Shaitan seeks to tempt her."²⁰

A textual interpretation of this hadith may lead to the perception that everything about a woman is considered 'awrah (a private part to be covered) and, therefore, that women should remain confined to their homes, refraining from participating in public life. Such a restrictive understanding, however, fails to capture the broader intent of the hadith and its contextual significance. A literal reading of this hadith can lead to limitations on women's movements and roles, but a contextual interpretation reveals a more nuanced perspective. Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence agree that covering the 'awrah is an absolute obligation.²¹ However, debates persist about the boundaries of 'awrah for both

¹⁸ A A Engineer, *The Rights of Women in Islam* (Hurst, 1992).

¹⁹ 'Jami' At-Tirmidhi 1173 - The Book on Suckling - كتاب الرضاع - Sunnah.Com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم) <<https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:1173>> [accessed 7 December 2024].

²⁰ Imam At-Turmuzi, *Sunan At-Tirmizi*, Nomor Hadis 1093. Hadis ini dishahihkan Syeikh Albani dalam *Irwaul Ghalil*, Nomor 273

²¹ Ibnu Rusyd, *Bidayat Al-Mujtahid Wa Nihayat Al-Muqtashid* (Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1982).



men and women. According to Imam Nawawi,²² the ‘awrah of a free woman includes all her body except her face and hands up to the wrists.

For those who consider the classical fiqh rulings on ‘awrah as final, men’s ‘awrah is limited to the area between the navel and the knees, while women’s ‘awrah encompasses the entire body except the face and hands. This understanding aligns with Q.S. An-Nur Verse 31:

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ
بِخُمْرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ

“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their chastity, and not to reveal their adornments except what normally appears. Let them draw their veils over their chests, ...”

The phrase “*wala yubdina zinatahunna illa ma zahara minhā*” is interpreted to mean that a woman’s entire body is considered ‘awrah, while “*wal yadhribna bikhumurihinna ‘alā buyūtihinnā*” indicates that women are obliged to wear the hijab. This interpretation is further reinforced by Q.S. Al-Ahzab Verse 59:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزُوجَكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلْبَابِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ آدَبٌ أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا
يُؤْذِينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

O Prophet! Ask your wives, daughters, and believing women to draw their cloaks over their bodies. In this way it is more likely that they will be recognized ‘as virtuous’ and not be harassed. And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Muhammad Syahrur²³ interprets the term ‘awrah in Q.S. An-Nur Verse 31 to mean “anything that causes shame when exposed.” He argues that ‘awrah is not strictly tied to notions of halal or haram but instead depends on cultural perceptions of modesty. For instance, someone who is bald might consider their baldness as ‘awrah and choose to wear a wig. Syahrur bolsters his argument with the hadith: “*Whoever covers the ‘awrah of a believer, Allah will cover their ‘awrah.*” According to Syahrur, ‘awrah relates to feelings of shame and varies across times and cultures, while certain aspects, such as modesty of the chest (*al-juyub*), remain constant.

Regarding Q.S. Al-Ahzab Verse 59, Syahrur emphasizes the context of the verse, which begins with the phrase *Yā Ayyuhannabiy* (“O Prophet”), signifying that it was intended as a teaching (*ta’lim*) rather than a binding legislation (*tasyri*). The verse, revealed in Madinah, served a temporal purpose—to protect women from harassment when they traveled for necessities. As such, he contends that its injunctions were specific to the social and security conditions of that time.²⁴

²² Imam Abi Zakaria Muhyiddin bin Syaraf Nawawi, *Kitab Al Majmu’ Syarh Al Muhadzab Lil Syirazi Juz 3* (Maktabah al Arsyad, 1980).

²³ Syahrur, p. 412.

²⁴ Syahrur, p. 413.



In a modern context, this hadith should be understood contextually. While the obligation to cover one's 'awrah remains part of Islamic law, the hadith does not imply rigid restrictions on women's participation in public life. Women retain the right to engage in social, political, and economic activities, as exemplified by the lives of the Prophet's wives, such as Khadijah (RA) and Aisha (RA), who were active in various fields.

This hadith also serves as a reminder of the responsibility women bear to maintain their dignity and modesty, both in appearance and conduct. However, this responsibility is not exclusive to women; it also applies to men, as highlighted in Q.S. An-Nur Verse 30–31. Therefore, the hadith should be understood as part of Islam's broader emphasis on moral and ethical behavior in social interactions. A more inclusive and contextual interpretation helps prevent discriminatory applications of the hadith and aligns its teachings with the universal Islamic values of justice and equity.

4) *The Hadith on Women's Leadership*

حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ الْهَيْثَمِ حَدَّثَنَا عَوْفٌ عَنِ الْحُسَيْنِ عَنِ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ قَالَ لَقَدْ نَمَعَنِي اللَّهُ بِكَلِمَةٍ سَمِعْتُهَا مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَيَّامَ الْجَمَلِ بَعْدَ مَا كَذَبْتُ أَنْ الْحَقَّ بِأَصْحَابِ الْجَمَلِ فَأَقَاتِلَ مَعَهُمْ قَالَ لَمَّا بَلَغَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّ أَهْلَ فَارِسٍ قَدْ مَلَكَوا عَلَيْهِمْ بِنْتُ كِسْرَى قَالَ "لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَوْ أَمَرَهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ".²⁵

Narrated Abu Bakra: "During the days (of the battle) of Al-Jamal, Allah benefited me with a word I had heard from Allah's Apostle after I had been about to join the Companions of Al-Jamal (i.e. the camel) and fight along with them. When Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was informed that the Persians had crowned the daughter of Khosrau as their ruler, he said, "Such people as ruled by a lady will never be successful."²⁶

The majority of classical scholars interpret this hadith literally, arguing that it prohibits women from holding positions of authority, such as head of state, judge, or similar high-ranking roles. They often cite Qur'anic verses that emphasize men's leadership, such as Q.S. Al-Baqarah Verse 228: "...But men have a degree [of responsibility] over them...", And Q.S. An-Nisa Verse 4:34: "Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [in support] from their wealth...". However, not all classical scholars agree. Abu Hanifah, for example, permits women to serve as judges in civil matters, though not in criminal cases. Meanwhile,

²⁵ 'Sahih Al-Bukhari 4425 - Military Expeditions Led by the Prophet (Pbuh) (Al-Maghaazi) - كتاب المغازي - Sunnah.Com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم) <<https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4425>> [accessed 7 December 2024].

²⁶ Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari, Shahih al-Bukhari, Juz. IV (Cet. III; Bairut: Dar Ibn Katsir, 1407 H./1987 M.), h. 1610.



Muhammad Jarir al-Tabari and Ibn Hazm of the Zahiri school allow women to serve as judges without restriction.²⁷

To understand this hadith, one must examine the circumstances in which it was stated. The hadith was narrated when the Prophet (PBUH) heard that the Persian Empire had appointed Buwaran bint Shiroiyah bin Kisra bin Parvez as queen in 9 AH. Her appointment followed a series of political assassinations, including the murder of her male relatives, which plunged Persia into chaos. The cultural norm of the time held that leadership roles were predominantly male, and her appointment broke with these traditions.²⁸

Modern scholars, such as M. Quraish Shihab,²⁹ argue that this hadith refers specifically to the situation in Persia and is not a general prohibition against women's leadership. He further contends that Islamic teachings do not explicitly restrict leadership to men. This view is supported by the Qur'anic account of Queen Bilqis of Sheba, a successful female ruler mentioned in Q.S. An-Naml Verse 32–34. Her story demonstrates that women can effectively lead a nation.

The differing interpretations of this hadith reveal a division between classical and modern scholars. Classical scholars often emphasize men's physical and mental advantages as prerequisites for leadership. In contrast, modernist scholars classify Islamic teachings into fundamental and non-fundamental categories, considering leadership to be interpretive and subject to change based on social development. They argue that leadership is an open competition accessible to both men and women based on their capabilities.

In a modern context, this hadith should be understood in light of the evolving social and political dynamics. Women such as Margaret Thatcher, Indira Gandhi, Angela Merkel, and others have demonstrated exceptional leadership in various capacities. These examples highlight that leadership is not the exclusive domain of men but depends on individual competence and integrity. When interpreted contextually, this hadith does not contradict the Islamic principles of justice and equality. Instead, it underscores the importance of evaluating leaders based on their abilities, integrity, and capacity to bring benefit to society, regardless of gender. This approach aligns with the inclusive and equitable ethos of Islam, emphasizing the value of individual merit over rigid gender distinctions.

C. CONCLUSION

This study highlights that the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), particularly those often interpreted as exhibiting gender bias, require deeper analysis that considers the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they were articulated. A purely textual approach frequently results in interpretations that do not align with the principles of justice and gender

²⁷ Kamal Jaudah Abu Al-Mu'ati, *Wazifah Al-Maret'ah Fi Nazr Al-Islam* (Dar Al-hadi, 1980), p. 137.

²⁸ Syuhudi Ismail, *Hadis Nabi Yang Tekstual Dan Kontekstual* (Bulan Bintang, 1994), p. 65.

²⁹ Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Maudlu'I Atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat* (Mizan, 1996), p. 314.



equality upheld in Islam. Therefore, a contextual approach is essential for achieving a fair and relevant understanding in line with the dynamics of modern life.

Hadiths such as “women are created from a man’s rib,” “women are deficient in intellect and religion,” “women are ‘awrah,” and “a people who entrust their affairs to a woman will never prosper” have been analyzed in this study with an emphasis on the socio-cultural backdrop of the times they were conveyed. This contextual interpretation reveals that these hadiths were not intended to demean women but rather to reflect specific social realities and underscore the importance of maintaining harmony in gender relations.

The examination of these hadiths also demonstrates that the principles of gender equality in Islam are explicitly established in the Qur'an. The equality between men and women in fulfilling their roles as servants of Allah, stewards on Earth, and achievers of righteous deeds forms a crucial foundation for deconstructing discriminatory interpretations. Consequently, hadiths with apparent gender biases need to be reinterpreted to align with the universal values of Islam and the needs of contemporary society.

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